

LONDON SOCIETY.

JANUARY, 1875.

ABOVE SUSPICION.

BY MRS. J. H. RIDDELL.

CHAPTER XII.

MR. IRWIN WAXES COMMUNICATIVE.

ABOUT noon on the following day Mr. Irwin was somewhat surprised to see the rector of Fisherton enter his office once again.

'Now, pray, pray do not rise,' began the reverend gentleman, hat in one hand, umbrella under his arm, enforcing his entreaty with a persuasive pastoral grasp of his new friend's nearest shoulder.

'I have not come to disturb you, or to take up the time of a man to whom time is money. I just want to ask one question, and then I will be off.'

He stood on the hearthrug, looking the embodiment of clerical respectability. A novice in the deceptive nature of such appearances might have taken his note of hand as good for a thousand pounds; and even Mr. Irwin, who had seen something of the world and the people in it, found no little difficulty in realising the fact that, but for his interposition, the rectory goods would have been advertised for sale in the morning papers.

As if adversity were a cold bath, and a plunge in its waters refreshing, the Rector had come up out of its depths cheerful, rubicund, smiling. The white-

ness of his shirt was immaculate, the tie of his cravat a marvel of accuracy of design and neatness of execution, the fit of his coat precisely what the fit of the rector of Fisherton's coat should have been, whilst his hat was new undeniably. Mr. Wright had indeed bought it by the way.

Yes, here was the man Mr. Irwin needed—a man it seemed impossible wholly to dislike, and equally impossible wholly to respect—a man whom fate could not buffet out of countenance, and who would do anything he honestly could in a decent, even if doubtful, sort of way, to add to his income—a man who would not ask too many questions if it were necessary for him to hold his peace—who could talk, if talk were required, from his mouth, and keep silence if he understood silence meant profit.

So thought Mr. Irwin; and yet the Rector's first move seemed to indicate some error in his premises or his conclusions.

'I mentioned that little matter to Mrs. Wright last night,' said the reverend gentleman, who had four different ways of designating his better half, according as circumstances required.

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'I mentioned that little matter to Mrs. Wright last night,' said the reverend gentleman, who had four different ways of designating his better half, according as circumstances required.

'Yes,' answered Mr. Irwin, taking refuge behind that detestable monosyllable, as Mr. Wright considered it.

'And of course we feel we should be only too delighted to meet your views, even if such a course did not promise pecuniary advantage to ourselves; but there is one thing—one question——'

'Yes,' repeated Mr. Irwin.

'Really, now I am here, it seems such a ridiculous inquiry that I think I shall just go home again, leaving it unmade,' said Mr. Wright, who had never in the whole of his varied life believed that one word, and that word 'yes,' could have proved such a barrier to conversation.

'If I were in your place I should not do anything of the kind,' replied Mr. Irwin. 'You came here, as I understand, to ask some question, which now appears to you superfluous. Under any circumstances I should put it.'

'You are very good, I am sure. As you advise perfect candour, I will put it. Is there—was there anything peculiar about the birth of the young lady in whose welfare you are so deeply interested?'

The question was so different from anything Mr. Irwin had anticipated, that he stared at his visitor in blank amazement.

'I am not her mother,' he answered, 'but I have no reason to doubt she came into the world much as other children do, however that may be.'

'That is not what I mean,' said the Rector, thinking, with a cold shudder, that he had perhaps taken a wrong tack, and that Mr. Irwin was aware of it.

'What do you mean, then?'

'Well, I feel an awkwardness in putting the query into plain words. Cannot you help me a little?'

'I confess I cannot, unless you help me to understand what you want to know. Have you got an idea that the girl is queer in any way? Because, if you have, I can answer you. She is as sane as either of us, and a dear, good little creature beside.'

'I give you my word such a notion never crossed my mind,' said Mr. Wright heartily. 'The fact is, I imagined—that is, I did not imagine, but I thought I should like to know whether the young lady's parents were—married.'

'Certainly they were. I was present at the marriage.'

'You have taken a load off my mind,' exclaimed the Rector, holding out his hand, and shaking Mr. Irwin's till that gentleman's fingers tingled. 'I am so thankful, though of course I never really felt any apprehension. I am so glad. My dear wife will be so relieved. We shall be delighted to try to fill the place of parents to your orphan niece.'

Mr. Irwin took his hand, which the Rector had at length released, into his own custody, and folding its fellow over it, said, 'As a matter of curiosity, I wish you would tell me how my niece's legitimacy can prove any relief to Mrs. Wright.'

'With the greatest pleasure,' answered the Rector. 'Like myself, my wife is an Irishwoman—that is, I would say——'

'Never mind the bull, Mr. Wright. You will only correct it, I foresee, by saying an Irishman. Mrs. Wright being, like you, an Irishwoman, what follows?'

'Well, you know what Irishwomen are.'

'I do in the States. I cannot compliment you on your compatriots there.'

'I do not know anything about

them in the States,' said Mr. Wright a little impatiently.

'What you wish to say, I suppose,' suggested Mr. Irwin, 'is that Irishwomen are usually supposed to have a higher standard of morals, and are more capable of acting up to it, than the women of other countries.'

'That is it,' agreed the Rector; 'only you should not have interpolated "supposed" into your sentence. They have, sir; they are.'

'I am quite willing to take your word on both points, Mr. Wright,' said Mr. Irwin. 'Except as "helps," I have no acquaintance with their virtues or vices. Still I ask what then?'

'Why, only this. My poor dear has passed through sufficient trouble and experienced sufficient sorrow to make her tolerant and pitiful to any sinner. And I think I may safely say, no outcast from society, no deserted creature, no poor wretch plunged in sin and misery, would appeal to her womanly heart in vain. Nevertheless, she has her crotchets. Her father, though one of the kindest men who ever lived, was full of them; and, further, all ladies—Mrs. Irwin, whom I have not the honour of knowing, of course excepted—have their whims and fancies.'

'You need not except Mrs. Irwin. She has her whims and fancies, which, like a good husband, I respect,' was the reply.

'Dear, dear! I am sorry to hear you say that,' remarked Mr. Wright, with more earnest sympathy than Selina might altogether have approved. 'Well, then, talking to a family man—a man blessed, no doubt, with a wife in every respect as admirable as mine, but still aware, from experience, of the peculiarities of the better sex—I may say Mrs. Wright has very strong opinions on the

subject we have been discussing. And though I do not mean to say she would decline the responsibility of taking charge of a—hem!—child born out of wedlock, still she would accept the trust in fear and trembling, lest the sin of the mother might be entailed on the child.'

'Do I understand you to say that Mrs. Wright believes, if a woman goes wrong, her child, differently placed, differently educated, differently guarded, kept from temptation, is likely, out of sheer depravity, to go wrong too?'

'You put the matter strongly,' suggested the Rector.

'Do I put it too strongly?' asked Mr. Irwin.

'I do not know that you do,' was the reply. 'I told you my wife had her prejudices.'

'Well, it is a very strange notion,' said Mr. Irwin thoughtfully.

'I do not believe,' began the Rector, clearing his throat, 'that the idea of mental as well as bodily maladies being hereditary is so singular a one as you seem to imagine. You are a good churchman, as I know, and therefore I need scarcely do more than remind you—'

'Does Mrs. Wright think other sins, besides that of bringing an unfortunate infant into a world which has no place and no name ready for it, are transmitted from parents to children?' asked Mr. Irwin, cutting ruthlessly across the Rector's meditated discourse. 'Take murder, for instance. There was a man hung at Newgate last Monday. Suppose him to have left a child, do you imagine it likely that child will commit murder also?'

'I trust not, but I should consider the probability of his taking away life greater than in the case

of one of my own boys for instance.'

'Given, that one of your boys and he were so situated as to start with the same advantages or disadvantages——'

'They could not start the same, he being his father's son, and my boy being my son.' And Mr. Wright stood virtuously upright, internally thanking God and glorifying himself that his children were not as other children, inasmuch as they called him father, and his wife Selina mother.

'It is a curious speculation,' said Mr. Irwin, at length, lifting his head and looking thoughtfully in the Rector's self-satisfied face. 'I will not say you are wrong, but I hope you are not right, or else it would be a dreary prospect for philanthropists and social reformers.'

'We are all bound to do what lies in our power to make this sinful world better,' remarked Mr. Wright; 'and by the blessing of Providence, philanthropists, and we poor clergymen, and true Christians like yourself, are able to effect some good even amongst the most depraved classes of society; but it would be worse than folly to shut our eyes to the fact that vice is hereditary—or, if you prefer a milder expression, that most weaknesses are constitutional and capable of transmission. As we say in Ireland, "The dirty drop will come out," and it will, too. I could give you fifty instances in which money, and education, and association have been employed to counteract its influence in vain.'

'We have digressed considerably from the subject of my niece,' remarked Mr. Irwin. 'Am I to understand all obstacles are now removed, or is there any other question you wish to put to me?'

'None, not one,' answered the

Rector, inflating his chest and rising a little on his toes to give greater emphasis to the utter confidence he reposed in the respectability of Mr. Irwin, and Mr. Irwin's relations.

'So far, so good,' said that gentleman; 'but now there is an explanation I wish to give to you. It is a necessary explanation, or I should not make it; it is not altogether pleasant, and therefore I must beg that you will regard it as confidential.'

'You may say anything to me,' replied Mr. Wright. 'In the interests of a friend, I can be secret as the grave—silent as the dead——'

'I wish you would sit down,' suggested Mr. Irwin.

'My dear friend, why did you not mention that wish sooner?' replied the Rector, seating himself with alacrity. 'I know how disagreeable it is to talk up to a man. And now tell me your difficulty—but stop. First, am I, or am I not to mention the matter to my wife?'

'I think that from so admirable a wife and discreet a lady you ought to have no secrets,' was the answer.

'Of my own I have none,' said the Rector, which was indeed very true, for Mrs. Wright would never have permitted him to indulge in such a luxury; 'unless it may be when I occasionally attempt a pious fraud and try to make worldly matters look brighter than they really are, so as not to worry the poor soul unnecessarily; but, bless you, she always finds out that I have been deceiving her. A friend's secret, however, I would, if he desired it, keep safe in my own bosom;' and Mr. Wright thereupon tapped his chest, which was certainly capacious enough for the purpose indicated.

'We will not exclude Mrs. Wright in this instance,' said Mr. Irwin. 'What I wish to tell you is that my wife is not aware of my niece's existence.'

'She is his daughter,' thought the Rector, feeling now quite confident upon that point. 'Probably the offspring of some youthful, wretched *mésalliance*.'

'You don't mean it,' he remarked aloud.

'I do mean it,' persisted the other. 'I have never mentioned her name to my wife, and if I can avoid doing so, I never shall name it. Some years ago—it does not matter how many—I found myself in the possession of a considerable sum of money, part of which I held in trust for other people, and a portion of which I might have fairly appropriated to my own use. But I had reason for supposing—indeed, for knowing—the money had been acquired by questionable means; and I resolved to employ none of it beyond what might be absolutely needful for the necessities of my position, for my personal pleasure or advancement in life.'

'A resolution which did you honour,' observed the Rector; and a glow of conscious rectitude flushed his face as he mentally considered how much he should like to be placed in a position where he could not only make such a resolve, but keep it.

'In furtherance of this design,' continued Mr. Irwin, 'I went to America, where I obtained employment in the house of Irwin and Son, die-sinkers. Mr. Irwin was an Englishman, originally engaged in business with his brother in the very premises where I am now speaking to you.'

'I follow your words,' said Mr. Wright, as the speaker paused. 'I shall understand their meaning presently.'

'In the particular class of work to which he had devoted his life I was not inexperienced—indeed, I may say, without vanity, there are few men who know more of its mysteries than I; and Mr. Irwin, whose heart was in his trade, took a fancy to me, and eventually placed me in a lucrative and responsible position. All this time, however, I was his clerk—his servant—what you will that signifies dependence and inequality of rank, and I did not encroach on his kindness—I did not intrude myself on his notice because he was good enough to think me of service in his business. After I had been with him for some time, a terrible affliction befell him. His son—his only son—died. He had loved that son well as his child; but I do think he loved him more as the future representative of Irwin and Son. He moped about, and hugged his grief, and neglected his business, and during that period I managed everything for him—managed so well, that his connection, instead of falling off, extended—the reputation of his house grew. He had one other child, a daughter. Now you begin to comprehend my story. I should not, situated as I was, have dreamed of aspiring to her hand; but she honoured me with her regard, her father more than approved of the arrangement, and by marriage I stepped into the name and the place of the dead son.

'Absent from England, and likely to remain absent for ever, I made no mention to father or daughter of the few relations I possessed. Within a couple of years of my marriage, however, the brother with whom my Mr. Irwin had originally been in partnership here died childless, and his fortune and his business passed to the man with whom he had quarrelled forty years previously. Immediately

upon this event he was seized with that *maladie du pays* which, sooner or later, afflicts every true-born Briton, and nothing would content him but to dispose of the American business, and return to London and Eastcheap. How earnestly I entreated that he would let me have the American business, I could not tell you; but he refused. His whim was to make his name world-known in connection with this establishment, and it was not for me, who owe everything almost I possess to his generosity, to cross such a fancy.

'Certainly not,' agreed Mr. Wright promptly, remembering, no doubt, that if old Mr. Irwin's whim had not chanced to bring him across the Atlantic, the Rectory would most probably have been stripped of some of its choicest treasures. 'The gentleman I had the pleasure of seeing yesterday, then, no doubt is your respected father-in-law?'

'Yes; eccentric, but admirable—a just man, a staunch friend, an affectionate father. Happy in his business, in the home he makes in London with us, and happy, above all, in his grandchildren—in one especially, a boy, who is hereafter to compass wonders in the way of commercial achievement. A cheerful interior, you will think. Yet there is a slight shadow lying over it. My wife's health is wretched. I do not know what is the matter with her, neither do the doctors, neither does she herself. If she had been a poor woman, and compelled to exert herself, it is possible her health might have been better. As matters stand, she has sunk into a state of physical helplessness and mental irritability, which compels us to avoid subjecting her to the slightest annoyance. Were I differently situated—were I a free man, even if a much less wealthy—were my wife

strong, and able to share any trouble with me, our house, of course, would be the most fitting home for my niece to come to.'

'I understand your position—I recognise the difficulty. You *could* not take her to your own home,' remarked Mr. Wright, thinking of his wife Selina, and the hundred a year she had already in the dead of night verbally appropriated to many domestic needs.

'You do not understand all my difficulty yet,' continued Mr. Irwin. 'I never could have mentioned the existence of this girl, to whom I am, in fact, sole guardian, without entering into a number of details which, for various reasons, are to me fraught with very great pain; and it would be utterly impossible for me to open the subject now without introducing an apple of discord into my home.'

'Utterly,' agreed Mr. Wright. Sorry indeed would he have been to take such an apple and present it for Selina's acceptance.

'Therefore I judged it better to look out for some family with whom I could place my little niece,' finished Mr. Irwin. 'I advertised my requirements, and have had many interviews with various persons in consequence; but all proved more or less unsatisfactory, and I had almost made up my mind to allow her to remain at school for another year, when you came to Riversdale.'

'A most providential visit for me,' murmured the Rector, with a lively memory of the fifty pounds, and a still livelier faith in other fifties he trusted were yet to follow.

'I trust it may prove providential for my niece,' said Mr. Irwin; 'for she is a very lonely little woman.'

'Poor dear!' ejaculated Mr. Wright. 'It shall not be our fault, Mr. Irwin, if she is not

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happy in our humble home—that I promise you.’

‘Thank you,’ said Mr. Irwin. ‘I am sure you will fulfil your promise;’ and the pair shook hands once more.

‘By-the-by,’ remarked the Rector, returning after he reached the first landing, and putting his head inside the door again, ‘you have not yet told me the young lady’s name.’

‘Miles,’ was the reply.

‘Not her Christian name, surely!’ exclaimed Mr. Wright, to whom the cognomen was familiar enough in his own dear land.

‘That is Bella.’

‘Bella Miles,’ repeated the Rector. ‘I shall not forget. Much obliged. Good morning.’

CHAPTER XIII.

MR. WRIGHT WONDERS WHAT SELINA WILL SAY.

It seemed as if, after all, Miss Bella Miles, kept so studiously from disturbing the domestic peace—if peace such an armed neutrality could be called—of Mr. and Mrs. Irwin, was to prove, even before she appeared at Fisherton, an apple of discord between the Rector and his wife.

There were many things Mrs. Wright wanted to do on the strength of her coming, which Mr. Wright’s knowledge of Mr. Irwin’s character and position taught him could not be done; and when he ventured to suggest difficulties, Selina waxed fractious.

‘Of course we must refurnish a bedroom for her,’ said Mrs. Wright. ‘She can sleep in it when no one is staying here; and it will do for best bedchamber when Colonel Leschelles, or any one else very particular, comes for a few days. And we had better have good articles when we are buying—they

always prove the cheapest in the long run.’

‘You cannot get them without ready money,’ ventured Mr. Wright; ‘and where that is to come from perhaps you know. I confess I do not.’

‘It shall come from Mr. Irwin,’ she replied, standing well to her guns.

‘I don’t think it will,’ said the Rector; ‘at any rate, I should not select the things till you have his cheque in your purse to pay for them. But of course you know best.’

Which remark putting the lady on her mettle, she at once went to her desk, and in an extremely clear, pretty, and feminine hand wrote a clever little note to Mr. Irwin, assuring him of the pleasure she should feel in welcoming his niece to the Rectory, and adding a hope that in time the young girl ‘may become as much attached to me as I am sure I shall be to her.’ After this statement, that had no insincerity about it, since Mrs. Wright’s power of attaching herself to unlikely objects was indeed as boundless, and oftentimes as foolish, as her charity, the Rector’s wife went on to say: ‘So as to be certain to have everything ready for her reception by the time you mentioned to Mr. Wright, I am just ordering furniture for her room—ours being too heavy and old-fashioned, not to say shabby—to please a young lady whose tastes have been formed abroad. I hope to have all bright and pretty to greet her on her arrival here. Again assuring you that nothing that love and care can do to promote her happiness shall be wanting on my part,

‘Believe me

‘Yours very sincerely,

‘SELINA WRIGHT.’

‘Good heavens! they will refurnish the Rectory on the strength

of that hundred a year,' was Mr. Irwin's first thought; while once again the reality of the unwelcome visitor whose presence had driven Mr. Wright to Riversdale seemed an utter impossibility. 'Could the Rector and his wife be sane?' he wondered. 'Was it credible that, within ten days of having his goods rescued from the sheriff, Mr. and Mrs. Wright were actually talking of purchasing more goods, which in their turn would, no doubt, if this was the way the family at Fisherton meant to live on bread and water, be watched and guarded, when the next instalment of the old debt became overdue, by another emissary from Mr. Gath Reuben, sheriff's officer?'

'Instead of benefiting, I shall be ruining them,' considered Mr. Irwin. 'What ought I to do in the matter?' and he was perplexing himself on this point, when it suddenly crossed his mind that the Wrights were sane enough; that Mrs. Wright had apprised him of her hospitable intentions, with a view of getting the money to pay for them; and that the sooner he made her understand he had no intention of doing anything of the sort, the better it would prove for all parties interested.

Having so decided, he took pen in hand, and, in writing which exactly resembled copperplate, replied to Mrs. Wright's note as follows:—

'512 Eastcheap, London.

29th July, 18—.

'MY DEAR MADAM,

'I hasten to express my thanks for your very kind note, just received. Bella will, I trust, do her utmost to merit your good opinion, and to deserve the affection you are so generous as to offer. But pray do not make any alteration in the arrangements of your house on her account. Be-

lieve me, she will be more than satisfied with the present appointments of any room it may be most convenient for you to assign her. A girl who has been for years the inmate of a French school can have had no opportunity of acquiring a taste for luxuries; and, situated as she is, it would be most undesirable for her ever to do so. With assurances of my respect, and gratitude for all your kind intentions with regard to my niece's comfort and happiness,

'I have the honour to remain

'Yours faithfully,

'W. C. IRWIN.'

At the period of the world's history of which I write, the morning's post at Fisherton came heralded by the sound of a bugle. On the especial morning when Mr. Irwin's missive arrived at the Rectory—breakfast happening to be rather later than usual—Mrs. Wright was dispensing weak tea to the family generally, when the letters were brought in.

Copperplate penmanship being apt, as all the world knows, to occupy a considerable amount of space, Mr. Irwin's epistle felt bulky enough to have contained half a dozen cheques, for which reason Mrs. Wright laid it down beside her cup, with a satisfied little pat, and looked across at her husband with a look which said, 'The grey mare has again proved the better horse.'

Before he had finished his breakfast, Mr. Wright was called away to speak to one of his churchwardens; and by the time that individual had said his say and departed, the children were fed and out in the garden.

Cheerfully the Rector stepped back into the parlour, exclaiming, as he entered:

'Well, my dear, how much has our good friend sent you?'

'Read for yourself,' said Mrs. Wright, handing him the note, with an air of resignation. 'You need not talk to me about the man being a gentleman—and writing such a hand, too, like a clerk's!'

'I can tell you I thought I had never seen a nicer hand than his when he signed that cheque,' observed her husband.

'Oh! that is all past and done with,' retorted Mrs. Wright, whose gratitude for past favours was even more evanescent than that of the Reverend Dion. 'It is quite clear to me we have a Jew to deal with—yes, a Jew Christian—and we shall not be at all the better for Miss or her hundred a year—having to keep an extra servant, too.'

Now, this was one of the points over which she and her husband had argued not a little, and, consequently, the reverend gentleman at once replied that he could see no reason, or rhyme either, in keeping another servant.

'We have a pair already,' he remarked, not without reason on his side, 'and between them they get through less work than when we had only one. Given that we take on a third, we shall have to keep them, and do all the work ourselves.'

'I wish you had to do my work for a day—only one,' said Mrs. Wright—'and you would not talk so glibly about three servants being unnecessary.'

Having delivered herself of which sentiment, Mrs. Wright took her parasol, strolled out into the garden, found a comfortable seat, and was soon absorbed in a new novel. Never, in their poorest days, had the Rector's wife failed to pay her subscription to the library.

'It was essential to their position to keep *au courant* with what was going on in the literary

world.' And to do Mrs. Wright justice, she read a greater number and variety of books than any reviewer.

Curiously enough, all the things Mrs. Wright considered it incumbent upon her to perform, in order to maintain that position necessary to their well-being and success in life, were those for which she had a natural taste. Ill-conditioned people said she never believed in a duty unless it chanced to be a pleasure likewise, to which the lady herself, on one occasion, retorted, that it was only right to feel duty a pleasure.

'I am sure I try to do so,' finished the Rector's wife; and on this principle she found that duty demanded a third servant in addition to the two, whose wages, though paid in scrambling, irregular sort of fashion, they were scarcely able to manage.

'She must assist with the needlework, and get up your shirts, dear,' explained Mrs. Wright, when demonstrating that a third servant would prove a saving instead of an expense. 'We must not employ a laundress then at all, even for your surplices.'

The meekest of men domestically, Mr. Wright nevertheless rebelled at this. 'Help with the needlework she may,' he said, 'but get up my linen she never shall. I do not object to a shabby coat occasionally; but wear shirts looking as if they were mangled, and cravats like wisps, I will not; remember that, Selina.'

Whereupon Selina observed that he 'always thwarted her in any scheme she proposed for reducing the domestic expenditure.

'I am not sure,' thought Mr. Wright, as he walked through his parish, head well up, chest protruded, umbrella shouldered—'I am not sure' (he pronounced the

latter word shu-ah) 'whether Providence did not intend the shortness of money, at which I have so often repined, as a blessing. There is an under-current of mercy in many of those misfortunes poor humanity finds it so hard to endure; and it may be that I have purchased domestic happiness at the cheap price of chronic insolvency. It may be, God forgive me the ungracious thought, that Selina, if easy in her mind about pecuniary matters, might develop some sins of another kind fatal to that peace which has hitherto brooded over our home.'

Before the next Sunday Mr. Wright had eliminated a sermon from this idea. Having, for a wonder, received no dunning or threatening letters during the whole week, he was able to give more thought than usual to the subject he proposed treating; and he wrote what he wanted to say carefully, and blotted out freely, the result being a very good discourse, to which Mrs. Wright listened with pleased though critical ears.

'I am sure, Dion,' she said as they walked home together in the summer twilight—it was at evening service the Rector preached the sermon in question—that no one in that church could have failed to take some good for him or herself out of your words to-night. It was all so true and yet so plain. I have not your facility of expression, Dion, nor, of course, your grasp of mind, but I declare that often, in a vague sort of way, I have thought the evils we consider most unendurable are really blessings in disguise. For instance (I know you will not misunderstand what I say), it has sometimes occurred to me, if we had not been obliged to struggle for a large family and

contend with poverty, you might not have been one-half so amiable as you are; you might have been unreasonable, inclined to be capacious and irritable about trifles. Now, Dion, what are you laughing at? I am not jesting. I really do not think you could bear the sun of prosperity as well as you have done the winds of adversity.'

'I should like to be tried, my dear,' answered the Rector, forgetting to practise the virtue himself had inculcated, and then he laughed again; but he did not dare tell his wife that the same idea about her had given birth to his sermon.

'It is really very funny,' he said to himself, as he put his manuscript away with a goodly company of other documents of the same nature. 'I shall never be able to preach that sermon again with gravity—never!'

For Mr. Wright had brought a certain sense of humour into the world with him; and not all the years spent in borrowing and begging money, to keep wolves away from the domestic hearth, had been able to destroy his appreciation of any circumstance which struck him as ludicrous.

The furniture was not bought, but the new maid was hired; and then arose another little misunderstanding between the Rector and his wife.

Mr. and Mrs. Irwin were going to Paris, and it was Mr. Irwin's wish that his new friend should repair to the same place, at the same time, in order that Miss Miles might be committed to his charge by her uncle, and brought back to Fisherton by the Rector of that 'favourite summer resort'—see local guide-book.

Mr. Irwin, of course, was to hand Mr. Wright a sufficient sum to cover his travelling and hotel

expenses. And Mr. Wright, happy at the prospect of such a holiday as a schoolboy, delightedly closed with the proposal, and returned home, never doubting but that Selina would be delighted also to hear of the pleasure in store for her husband. To his astonishment, Mrs. Wright at once objected to the whole scheme.

'I do not think it would be at all proper, Dion, for you to be wandering about the Continent, alone with a young lady,' she began.

'But, my dear,' he interrupted, 'I have no idea of wandering about the Continent with any young lady. I shall bring her straight home.'

'If it be necessary for any one to go, I am the proper person,' persisted Mrs. Wright.

'Come, Selina, that is good!' cried the Rector. 'If it is not the correct thing for me to travel from Paris to London with a chit no older than one of my own girls, I am quite positive it would be most improper for you to be running over Paris with Mr. Irwin.'

'Don't be immoral, Dion,' entreated his wife.

'My dear, if any immorality has been suggested, most certainly I am not the one to blame. So far as I am concerned, you are welcome to go on this trip, instead of me; but I do not think Mrs. Grundy would be satisfied with such a proceeding, and I am quite certain Mr. Irwin would not.'

'I must beg of you not to mention Mr. Irwin to me,' said Mrs. Wright. 'He is not a gentleman, I am convinced. No gentleman would have so completely ignored me throughout this whole arrangement as he has done. But I am determined to assert my position. I shall go to Paris to fetch that girl.'

'If that is your resolve,' remarked Mr. Wright, 'we shall have to travel together, for, most decidedly, I mean to fetch that girl.'

Which was a very strong position for the Rector, who usually deferred to his wife, to take up.

'Very well; let us arrange to do so,' she said, after a minute's pause. 'I dare say we can manage to get the money somehow.'

Cash was short enough at the Rectory just then. But the state of the funds did not stop Mrs. Wright's contemplated journey. She packed her trunk, she made some shiftless arrangements for the well-being of her children, and then she caught a severe cold; so severe that the doctor forbade her leaving her room, and Mr. Wright consequently set out for Paris alone, enjoyed himself there for four days thoroughly, and on the fifth was introduced by Mr. Irwin to his niece.

'I tell Bella she has grown quite a woman since I saw her,' said Mr. Irwin, with a grave smile. 'I must not call her my little niece any longer, must I, Mr. Wright?' But Mr. Wright did not answer. For the moment he was struck literally dumb. He had expected to see an unformed, shy, retiring school miss; and suddenly there was presented to his astonished gaze a most beautiful girl-woman, the most beautiful girl, the Rector decided, he had ever seen; a young girl possessed of a charming voice, and still more charming manners—who seemed to pervade the room with her beauty, and who filled Mr. Wright's heart with a terrible apprehension.

'What will Selina say?' he thought. 'What are we to do in our house with a creature like this?'

(To be continued.)

NOTES ON POPULAR DRAMATISTS.

III.—MR. W. S. GILBERT.

IT is but a very short time since Mr. Gilbert promised to take a position second to no dramatist of the day. His plays were to be seen in all directions; managers clamoured for more; and the first representations of his works were attended by the recognised leaders of literature and art. The public applauded and the newspapers praised, for Mr. Gilbert's wit was facile and fluent, his humour trenchant and keen; and when each new play was announced his admirers hoped that his acute faults would have been overcome, and his weaknesses strengthened. His admirers have been disappointed. The faults seemed to have become chronic; interest in his plays diminished; the critics, disinclined to keep on for ever hiding blame and encouragingly giving praise, spoke freely, and acknowledged that Mr. Gilbert had not done what was expected. He had worked out his special vein—mythological comedy—and, reverting to comedy of everyday life, in which he had never been very strong, he wrote 'Charity,' and began to experience the bitterness of failure. At the time of writing, instead of seeing dramas from his pen occupying half-a-dozen stages, only one slight afterpiece by him is before the London public; nothing else has been played for a long time, and only one new piece is announced.

Whether it is that managers have grown shy of trusting their fate to Mr. Gilbert's hands, or whether he himself is angry at the cool reception his work has lately experienced, we are not able to judge. The only way we have of estimating a dramatist's position

is by noticing the number of plays he produces and the effect they create; and by this standard Mr. Gilbert at the present moment cannot be regarded as a successful writer. It would be an instructive task to examine the causes which have led to his decline in public estimation, and we do not think that they are hard to explain. In the first place, there can be little doubt that 'The Palace of Truth' and 'Pygmalion and Galatea' raised the author into a higher position than his desert merited. The new fancy of using magic power as an influence in plays which must be accepted as legitimate comedies was happy, and undoubtedly Mr. Gilbert worked out his ideas with subtle humour and considerable effect. That the plot of 'The Palace of Truth' was taken from a story of Madame de Genlis we do not hold as detracting from the credit due to the dramatist, who treated it with sufficient novelty to make it his own; and though the notion of mythological comedy is as old as Epicharmus and Aristophanes—indeed the very first comedies ever written had a mythological element—we are perfectly ready to admit that Mr. Gilbert struck out a new path for himself and made his way to admiration. But, even supposing that the vein is not so nearly worked out as the production of 'The Wicked World' would induce one to believe, a dramatist cannot gain the highest reputation while his efforts are confined to one line; and in plays which treat of society as at present constituted, of the everyday life around us, Mr. Gilbert is very unsatisfactory.

A play, to be effective, must win the sympathies of the audience, and it is here that, as a general rule, Mr. Gilbert completely fails. We do not insist that every pair of lovers should be united before the curtain falls; but we do insist that some of the characters should possess generous impulses, should excite our sensibilities by the exhibition of some little tenderness and good feeling. Mr. Gilbert's creations are generally cynical, and sometimes brutal, in their behaviour. They are constantly out of harmony with the spectator; few of them betray that generosity and nobility of spirit which arouses and enchains interest. They are frequently mean, treacherous, and suspicious; and, in short, but for the smartness of dialogue, Mr. Gilbert's plays would have very little to recommend and very much to condemn them. Take for instance 'An Old Score,' the first comedy, we believe, that the author produced, and note the characteristics of the *dramatis personæ*. Colonel Calthorpe is mean and dishonest, and has been criminal. His son Harold is a reckless gambler, and is besides extremely priggish and rude. 'I suppose I am a scoundrel,' he soliloquises. 'Heaven knows I've been told so often enough, and by men—and women—who've had better means of judging than he has!' James Casby, the Bombay merchant, who is engaged to the Colonel's niece, Ethel, acts in a very questionable way about the bills which Calthorpe had forged. Parkie is a scheming and time-serving attorney, cringing or overbearing as may best suit the object he has for the moment in view; Manasseh is a Jew money-lender; and Mrs. Pike a dishonest laundress. The two girls, Ethel Barrington and Mary Walters, are colourless, but perhaps may pass muster, though

Mary carries on a clandestine love affair with Harold. The only other character is Flathers, the footman, who finds the forged bills, and lets his master have them for a hundred pounds. Certainly all is made smooth at the end of the play; but we decline to believe in more than the temporary reformation of Lord Ovington (Colonel Calthorpe) and his son—unless, indeed, they are lucky enough altogether to escape temptation. The sentences with which the comedy opens are not happy. What gentleman would speak thus to a girl he had loved?—Ethel is at the piano, Harold lounging on a sofa:—

HAR. Ethel, my dear girl, I'd stand a great deal from you that I wouldn't stand from any one else, but there's a limit to one's endurance even of musical torture. I've stood Verdi and Offenbach with the constancy of an early martyr—but Beethoven—oh, hang it, I draw the line long before I get to Beethoven.

ETHEL. (*leaving the piano*) My music did not bore you once, Harold.

HAR. Of course it didn't. You see, one don't begin by being bored. The word is an expressive one, implying a slow, gradual process, possibly very agreeable in its earlier stages, but degenerating, as it goes on, into an intolerable nuisance.

ETHEL. Gentlemanly! (*comes down and sits R.*)

HAR. Besides, in the remote period you delicately indicate by the word "once," not only was I foolishly in love with you, but (what is more to the point) that tinkling old box of music was an uncommonly decent cottage piano. When I fondly adored you, it was my duty to fondly adore your music also. But now that James Casby holds my commission, you must look to him for an efficient discharge of the duties attached to the office. I can't undertake the drudgery of an adorer, unless I'm permitted to benefit by the emoluments. In a month, James Casby will be your husband. If you want to play to him, take my advice and do so before the month is up.

A little farther on is a scene between the scoundrels which the author seems to depict with parti-

cular gusto, to judge by the manner in which it is prolonged. Manasseh has called upon the Colonel to ask him to pay his son's debt of 764*l.*, and the Colonel, entering the drawing-room with the Jew, finds Harold, and bitterly reproaches him for his infamous behaviour:—

‘COL. You, sir—you unmitigated scoundrel, sir; you have ventured to deceive this good, this trusting old man; you have obtained this money under false pretences, sir.

MAN. Ah, how nice it is to hear him speak!

COL. You have endeavoured to rob this worthy old gentleman of his hard-earned savings—savings, sir, which would have gone far to have made his old age comfortable, if not luxurious.

MAN. Oh, it's beautiful—beautiful. Vat eloquence! Oh, lor!

HAR. Father, what are you talking about? The fellow's a Jew bill discounter!

MAN. Oh, there now! to hear that! oh, ain't it too bad after all I've done for him! Oh, lor!—

HAR. Hold your row, man; we know you.

COL. I don't care what he is, sir. Look at his grey hairs, sir! look at his tottering gait, sir! look at his tears, sir! and tell me anything you can plead would speak so eloquently as those silent advocates!

MAN. Oh! never heard anything like it, s'elp me! Oh, it's beautiful, beautiful!

COL. If he had thought proper to bring his action for the amount, I should have left you to defend it. But he has been more merciful than you; he has not subjected you to the exposure of a public trial; he has generously laid the matter before me, and (to HAROLD) fortunately for you, sir—fortunately for you—for I should have left you to yourself. As it is, I am willing to submit to the only verdict which under the circumstances I am sure a British jury could conscientiously give. Sir, there is no doubt you owe this poor old man the money!

MAN. O vat a noble old gentleman! Give me the harmony for honourable uprightness again all creation.

COL. (to MANASSEH) Worthy old man! It is most fortunate for you that your generous disposition prompted you to appeal to me, instead of making this discreditable business public. You would

have incurred the costs of a heavy action (which he could not possibly have paid), and at the same time, as I said before, I am willing to be bound by the only decision a jury could come to under the circumstances. My poor old friend, I am very sorry for you, but when he gave you those acceptances my imprudent boy was not of age.

MAN. Vat? not of age? Vell, I know he ain't of age; but vat of that? It's necessities—bills is necessities to such as him; you kep him short of money, and him the possible heir to a peerage!

COL. The heir to a peerage? Oh, quite a mistake, I assure you.

MAN. Vy, there's only two between him and the barony of Orington.

COL. Very true, but, ha! ha! Lord Orington's two healthy sons are as little likely to die during the next forty years as (pardon me) you are likely to live during that period. Besides, I have reason to believe that the elder one has just contracted a secret marriage. I am afraid, my good fellow, that the contingency on which you rely is too remote to affect the verdict.

MAN. Done! done! done! brown as a crumpe! but I'll bring my action if it costs me 500*l.*!

The atmosphere of the play appears unwholesome. ‘It is, amongst other things, from the impertinent figures unskilful dramatists draw of the characters of men, that youth are bewildered and prejudiced in their sense of the world,’ the ‘Tatler’ says; and surely if, when the mirror is held up to nature, Mr. Gilbert can make it reflect no pleasanter companions than such as these, he may well refrain from holding it up at all in the direction of everyday life.

We do not remember that any creation of his has taken a place in the gallery of dramatic personages,—we speak of his modern comedies—and indeed most of his people have done service in many plays and for many writers. ‘On Guard,’ brought out at the Court Theatre some two years back, may be accepted as a fair specimen of Mr. Gilbert's writing, and if it is looked at carefully it is not a matter for wonder that his *dramatis personæ*

should be ephemeral. An old writer has said that 'the parade of misplaced wit has spoiled almost as many comedies as actual dullness,' and 'On Guard' is full of the meretricious sparkle of 'modern comedy dialogue' upon which comment was made in a recent number of this Magazine.* The personages talk to each other in the rudest and most unnatural manner, with an utter disregard for 'good-breeding' and the convenances of society; and yet they insist upon telling each other that they are well-bred—probably because they know it would never be guessed unless they went out of the way to mention it. The heroine, Jessie, tells the most gentleman-like man of the party that his 'want of familiarity with the usages of society may hold him excused up to a certain point;' but it is really difficult to see what is to excuse the others for their persistent rudeness and ill-behaviour. Mrs. Fitzosborne, a young widow, is the chief offender, and is clearly delighted with her own powers of repartee. We think, however, that she somewhat overestimates her talent. The passages of *quasi* wit—for in this play Mr. Gilbert is far below his average—take place generally with Kavanagh, an adventurer. Here is one which evidently satisfies Mrs. Fitzosborne, and excites the hearty appreciation of her admirer, Captain Boodle. Kavanagh comes on board the yacht in which the others are sailing, and is greeted by the young widow:—

'Mrs. F. Oh, Mr. Kavanagh, I'm so delighted to see you.

KAVAN. Indeed!

Mrs. F. I am indeed. Now that you've joined we shall have such fun.

KAVAN. You're very good to say so.

Mrs. F. Oh, no! indeed I mean it.

BOODLE. (*aside*) Wait a bit! He'll catch it presently.

Mrs. F. Three weeks' yachting have blunted my faculties. Everybody is so stupid on board, and I'm glad you've come, because I want you to sharpen them for me.

KAVAN. Really, Mrs. Fitzosborne, that sounds like a compliment!

Mrs. F. Does it? I like a man who's easily pleased.

BOODLE. I'th coming; I don't know what it is, but I'th coming!

KAVAN. Well, when you admit that it is in my power to sharpen your blunted faculties—

Mrs. F. I credit you with all the brilliant qualities of a knifeboard! There—I'm better after that! (*sits*).

BOODLE. I'th come! He'th got it! I didn't know what it wath; but I knew it wath coming.

KAVAN. (*hurt*) I recognise the bluntness of which you complain! If it is in the power of a knifeboard to—

Mrs. F. To impart point and polish to my remarks, you will be only too happy to serve me in that capacity. Wasn't that what you were going to say, Mr. Kavanagh?

KAVAN. Well—yes. (*Aside*) Confound the woman, I wish she'd let me finish.

BOODLE. You're too hard on him, Mrs. Fitz. Whenever Mr. Kavanagh hath a poor little thquib to ditchcharge you alwayth take the bang out of it!

Mrs. F. Mr. Kavanagh handles his squibs so awkwardly that he would certainly burn his fingers with them if I didn't take them out of his hands and finish them for him.

BOODLE. That's another; nothing could be fairer than that!

Mrs. F. Oh, Baby Boodle, do go and get your breakfast while it's calm.

BOODLE. I wath only backing you up.

Mrs. F. Thank you, but I'm quite equal to meeting anything Mr. Kavanagh can say without assistance.

BOODLE. He'th getting it all over him.

(*Aside*) Don't spare him; he'th bad form—he'th got no friends.

We will not pretend to share Boodle's appreciation. Mrs. Fitzosborne is quite contented, however: 'This man does give one such chances!' she says, triumphantly, after telling Kavanagh that his own jokes do not amuse him, because he has heard them so

* See 'Notes on Popular Dramatists,' II. Mr. James Alberly. *London Society*, for October 1874.

often before. 'At all events, I may conclude from your admission that they amuse you, that you have not heard them before?' he asks. Her reply is delightful in its unconscious *naïveté*: 'No, indeed! the society in which I move is so horribly well-bred.' We must of course accept the lady's word, and can only regret that she gives such scant evidence in support of her assertion. Boodle's joke about tossing, made to a young girl, is perhaps more remarkable for vulgarity than wit. 'She hates Kavanagh,' Boodle says, 'and she thnubs him; I thnub him too,—

— but I don't thnub him as well as thee does. Kavanagh acts upon her as a red rag acts upon a bull. I believe she'd toth him for a penny.

JERRIE. Toss him for a penny?

BOODLE. Yeth. I mean she'd gore him. I don't mean headth and tailth—and yet I *do* mean headth and tailth, when you come to think of it! Ha, ha! nothing could be fairer than that!

'Charity,' produced at the Haymarket last January, was better written so far as dialogue went, but the construction was bad, and what interest the actors succeeded in arousing, they could not sustain. It had all the advantages of skilful representation; the cast included Messrs. Buckstone, Chippendale, Kendal, Miss Robertson, Mrs. Alfred Mellon, and other meritorious performers; but the comedy had a short life, and not a merry one.

'Randall's Thumb,' with Messrs. Hermann Vezin, Belford, Righton, Miss Litton, and other favourites in the cast, met with a tolerable reception. Human nature is regarded from a higher standpoint in 'Randall's Thumb' and 'On Guard,' than it is in 'An Old Score' and 'Charity'; consequently the two former were more acceptable; but none of them takes high rank as a comedy; none is at all above the average of the plays

which are constantly being produced by different writers at different theatres.

The subtle humour which made 'The Palace of Truth' famous has been spoken of with admiration. 'Pygmalion and Galatea' also contains much that is excellent, and many beauties of thought and expression, but it is necessary to throw away all remembrance of the original legend, from which the author has frequently departed in letter and spirit. His Pygmalion is only Grecian in his attire: he reflects and speaks like an Englishman of the nineteenth century. The fabled Pygmalion had no wife—and if he had ever married one, she would certainly not have influenced him as Cynisca did her husband in the play: the Grecian wives of antiquity held a very different position in relation to their lords. We are nevertheless inclined to place this first—with perhaps one exception—amongst the author's works, for there is a certain tenderness and sympathy with human nature about it which is very rarely to be found in his writing. The blank verse in which it is written flows smoothly, as a rule, and the mode of expression, though not frequently poetical, is adequate. It is thus that Pygmalion, looking at the image he has carved, laments the littleness of his powers:—

"The thing is but a statue, after all."
Cynisca little thought that in those words

She touched the keynote of my discontent.

True, I have power denied to other men.
Give me a senseless block of marble.

Well,

I'm a magician, and it rests with me
To say what kernel lies within the shell.
It shall contain a man—a woman—
child—

A dozen men and women if I will:
So far, the gods and I am neck and
neck—

Nay—so far I can beat them at their
trade.

I am no bungler—all the men I make
 Are straight-limbed fellows, each magnificent
 In the perfection of his manly grace.
 I make no crook-backs—all my men are gods,
 My women goddesses in outward form.
 But there's my tether. I can go so far
 And go no farther—at that point I stop,
 To curse the bonds that hold me sternly back—
 To curse the arrogance of those proud gods
 Who say, "Thou shalt be greatest among men
 And yet infinitesimally small."

The harshness which so constantly destroys the effect of Mr. Gilbert's work does not fail to assert itself; and when he has lost his sight, Pygmalion's rage against the innocent object of his misfortune is painful and offensive. Cynisca, returning to find Galatea endowed with life, suspects the fidelity of her husband, and calls down on him the wrath of Artemis, who blinds him. Galatea is innocent as a child: it is through no fault or failing of hers that Pygmalion suffers before his wife's wrath, and the scene which follows is a serious blot in the play. Of 'The Wicked World,' the third of Mr. Gilbert's Haymarket mythological comedies, we speak with some hesitation. The play was ingenious; on the whole it was well received, and it was impossible not to admire the fancies and humours of the production; but it was, in parts, very strongly tainted with that unpleasant flavour which is seldom absent from the author's works. The circumstances which followed its production will be fresh in the public memory. The 'Pall Mall Gazette,' a journal whose conduct is too well known to need eulogy, stigmatised the play as coarse and indecent, and, in some parts, altogether unfit for public representation. That the critic sincerely meant what he wrote cannot for a

moment be doubted, for he quoted extracts from the portions he condemned, and had they therefore not been liable to the construction he placed upon them, he and his editor would have been palpably stultified. His criticism was not harshly worded.

'No married man cares twopence for intrigues
 At which his wife connives,'

was a sentiment he called 'by no means noble;' and it is not to be wondered at that he should have reprobated the line which speaks of the world as a place

'Where women are not devils—till they're dead.'

Mr. Gilbert, however, chose to see malice and personal spite in the article, although the position held by the paper negatives the possibility of his views, and he brought an action against the publisher for libel. The case was very thoroughly sifted, some of the ablest counsel of the day being engaged on both sides. Several distinguished writers and actors declared they could see no harm in the play, but nevertheless the jury found a verdict for the defendant, though at the same time they expressed an opinion that Mr. Gilbert meant no harm by his equivocal sentences. Very likely he did not; but if he has any more mythological comedies forthcoming, it will be advisable for him to submit them to the revision of some person who has a perception of what, without straining the text, may very easily be taken for impurity of thought and expression. The 'Pall Mall Gazette,' by its outspoken candour, did a distinct service to the cause of the drama.

After condemnation and half-hearted praise, it is pleasant to be able to speak in terms of un-

qualified eulogy; and it is certain that Mr. Gilbert has one very strong qualification for stage writing. As an eccentric humorist he is wholly admirable, and his power of creating mirth out of the slightest materials is really wonderful. It is apart from the object of these papers to comment on writings which have no connection with the theatre; but it would be difficult to let pass the opportunity of saying a word in praise of 'The Bab Ballads.' Both the verse and the illustrations are amongst the most delightfully funny productions of the present day, and when Mr. Gilbert can transfer the tone of them to the stage, the result is extremely diverting. 'Creatures of Impulse' is a sort of dramatised Bab Ballad, and makes an afterpiece far above the average. It was, indeed, as a writer of burlesque that Mr. Gilbert began his career as a dramatist; all his pieces of this class have merit, and best of them is the whimsical allegory founded on the Poet-Laureate's 'Princess.' The notion of tampering with so fine a work was rash; but the representation must have satisfied Mr. Tennyson's warmest admirers. The play was constructed with care and skill; the interest was well sustained, and the writing excellent. King Gama speaks of himself as 'an easy man' in the poem; Mr. Gilbert, however, makes him bitter of tongue and deformed in body. In this he departs from the Laureate's creation, but the character is striking and well preserved. In the play, Gama is summoned to King Hildebrand's palace, to account for the non-appearance of his daughter, who was betrothed in childhood to Prince Hilarion. Gama's bitter tongue lashes all with whom he is brought into contact with stinging effect. He makes Hildebrand

happy by telling him what Rumour has said of the castle; and as the King bows his acknowledgments, abruptly clinches his sentence with, 'But she's a liar!'

'How do you like your king?' he asks Cyril.

'Vile rumour says he's all but imbecile—'

Now that's not true!

CYRIL. My lord, we love our king:

His wise remarks are valued by his court

As precious stones.

GAMA. And for the selfsame cause!

Like precious stones, the wit of Hildebrand

Derives its value from its scarcity!

Hildebrand expostulates at the delay which has taken place in the fulfilment of the contract; and Gama cries out that the King is going to redeem his long list of promises; and very properly, as wise men should, begin at the beginning. Then Hildebrand is enraged.

'Stop that tongue,

Or you shall lose the monkey head that holds it!

Oh, I'll be even with you yet for this.

GAMA. Bravo! your king deprives me of my head

That he and I may meet on even terms.'

Hilarion and his companion, however, determine to set off and storm the University which the Princess has founded—

'With prudes for proctors, dowagers for deans,
And sweet girl-graduates in their golden hair.'

Gama tells them to storm away bravely, as they will only be met by girls; but Hilarion explains what arms he and his companions propose to use; how they will charge their mines with sighs; use croquet mallets for battering-rams, fair flowers for blades, and *bombon* crackers for artillery. Gama does

not think these preparations will be successful. He says:—

'And so you think to conquer them with sighs?

My good young gentleman, a sigh to them

Is simply an exceptionally marked Contraction of the intercostal muscles!

Croquet is interesting only when

It illustrates familiar theories

Of incidental and reflecting angles.

Fair flowers, to them, are mere embodiments

Of calyx, pistil, stamina, and petal.

Expressive eyes would have their charm, no doubt—

HILDE. Of course!

GAMA. But only, be it understood, As illustrating theories of vision!

Still Hilarion, Cyril, and Florian make their way to Castle Adamant, and the picture which is presented of the students is full of playful satire. Ada asks Chloe to come to her room and spend a long, long evening, and bring her steam-engine; and Chloe consents, anxious to see all Ada's nice new things, 'the quadrant and the anemometer, and, oh! that darling, darling dumpy-level I've heard so much about!' Lydia complains of the extravagance of a friend who has got another new theodolite, the fifteenth that month, and laments that her own 'went out of fashion half a year ago;' and then Melissa runs in with information of the greatest importance:—

'MELISSA. I say, my dear, I have such news for you! I've just been shown

The robes for doctors of divinity.

Oh, it's the sweetest thing!—Magenta silk,

Trimmed with chinchilla, *bouillonné* behind,

Gored to the figure, though; and on the skirt,

Two rows of Cluny lace as deep as that!

CHLOE. Oh my! how lovely!

MELISSA. Then the trencher cap

Is amber satin, trimmed with Cluny lace

And rows of pearls; and round the outer edge

The tiniest, tiniest rosebuds in the world!

ADA. (to CHLOE) It's much more lovely than the legal gown—

Green grenadine, with rûchings down the front,

That we shall wear.

CHLOE. (pouting) I shall give up the law

And go into the church! I've always felt

A serious longing for a pastor's life;

Besides, I'm dark, and look a fright in green!

There are more serious matters to be seen after, however; and presently Lady Blanche enters to award punishments. Sacharissa is to be expelled for introducing chessmen; and on tearfully replying that they are only made of wood, is sternly told that they are 'men with whom you give each other mate.' Sylvia is rusticated for daring to put three rows of lace insertion round her graduate's gown, and Phyllis gets into terrible disgrace for having made in her drawing-book a sketch of a perambulator—a *double* perambulator! The Princess Ida's address to her class is capitally written, the peroration especially:—

'If we succeed,

We'll treat him better than he treated us,

But if we fail—oh then let hope fail too!

Let no one care one penny how she looks!

Let red be worn with yellow—blue with green,

Crimson with scarlet—violet with blue!

Let all your things misfit, and you yourselves

At inconvenient moments come undone!

Let hair-pins lose their virtue; let the hook

Disdain the fascination of the eye,—

The bashful button modestly evade

The soft embraces of the button hole!

Let old associations all dissolve,

Let Swan secede from Edgar—Grant from Gask,

Sewell from Cross—Lewis from Allenby—

In other words, let Chaos come again!

The pompous phrases of abstract philosophy are ludicrously bur-

lesqued, and the dialogue is full of happy touches. Mr. Gilbert does not depart far from the original framework of the legend. Psyche recognises the young men, who are now disguised as students of the Princess's class; and when she would betray them, they remind her of the old days when, with that tendency towards blue-stock- ingism which has brought her to Castle Adamant, she used to call a buttercup '*ranunculus bulbosus*;' to drive the conjuror wild by explaining how all the tricks were done; and when at dinner-parties, brought down to dessert, would tackle visitors with—

'You don't know

Who first discovered longitude—I do—
Hipparchus 'twas, B.C. one sixty-three !'

An *enfant terrible* indeed !

The Lady Blanche discovers the plot, however, for the disguised princes were weak on the subject of female accomplishments. They thought that Cluny lace was Valenciennes; did not know the difference between hemming and stitching; called a gusset a gore, and a tuck a founce; Cyril, too, trolls the '*careless tavern catch*, unmeet for ladies,' and the secret comes to light: but Hilarion saves Ida, who has fallen into the lake, and the young princes are permitted to depart.

King Hildebrand's method of making Gama miserable is excellent. Gama is told to make himself at home, and give what orders he pleases as to the conduct of army and state. 'They will not be obeyed, but that don't matter,' Hildebrand concludes; and as Gama's acquiescence is very faintly expressed, his host explains his meaning. 'The ecstasy of command,' Hildebrand says, 'is seriously dashed when you reflect that you are responsible for the consequences of your actions;' but

Gama is not to suffer from this drawback. At his court, Hildebrand explains, his guest is to be treated with every outward token of respect; every one will attentively receive his orders, and systematically disobey them. He may command what he likes, and as his commands will never, under any circumstances, be carried out, no evil will result from the failure of any plans he may conceive.

The confusion in the Princess's army, when it is really called upon to show the courage of its opinions and do battle for its rights, is displayed in an extremely diverting manner. Ida burns to exhibit the superiority of woman, even in the art of warfare, and calls out her troops. She then inquires for Sacharissa, her surgeon, who makes obeisance.

PRIN. We shall require your skill to
heal the wounds
Of those that fall.

SACHA. What! heal the wounded?

PRIN. Yes!

SACHA. And cut off real live legs and
arms?

PRIN. Of course!

SACHA. I wouldn't do it for a thousand
pounds!

PRIN. Why, how is this? Are you
faint-hearted, girl?

You've often cut them off in theory.

SACHA. In theory I'll cut them off
again

With pleasure, and as often as you
like—

But not in practice!

PRIN. Coward, get you hence!
I've craft enough for that, and courage
too.

I'll do your work! My Amazons, ad-
vance!

Why, you are armed with spears—mere
gilded toys!

Where are your muskets, pray?

ADA. Why, please
you, ma'am,

We left them in the armoury, for fear
That, in the heat and turmoil of the
fight,

They might go off!

PRIN. "They might!" Oh,
craven souls!

Go off yourselves! Thank heaven, I
have a heart

That quails not at the thought of meeting men.

I will discharge your muskets. Off with you!

Where's my bandmistress?

CHLOE. Please you,

ma'am, the band

Do not feel well, and can't come out to-day!

We have lingered over this, because it is pleasant to recall the best things in a good work, and to award whole-hearted commendation to an author who has gifts very greatly above the average, but whose writing, nevertheless, is rarely satisfactory. The thought of the many graceful passages in Mr. Tennyson's 'medley,' as he terms it, and especially of those most exquisite lyrics, 'Tears, idle tears,' and 'O Swallow, Swallow, flying, flying south,' makes us at first resent the idea of a whimsical allegory founded on it; but Mr. Gilbert's skilful treatment of his subject speedily subdues this feeling, and his version of 'The Princess' remains a model of a delicate, refined, and witty play. His burlesques generally are very good, and, so far as we remember, he was chiefly instrumental in raising the character of the burlesque music. It is true that Mr. Byron sometimes introduced operatic selections into his extravaganzas, but for the most part the music was chosen from the 'comic songs' of the day, and wearied the souls of musical hearers. 'The drama's laws,' however, 'the drama's patrons give:' the comic songs were, sad to say, applauded, and therefore burlesque-writers can hardly be blamed for choosing; but nevertheless Mr. Gilbert must be praised for the improvement which he did much to effect. 'Robert the Devil,' with which the Gaiety opened, contained no comic songs; in their place were selections from popular *opéra-bouffe*

music, and one or two numbers from Meyerbeer and other composers—the 'A fiasco cielo' chorus from 'La Sonnambula' was capitally managed in a wax-work scene, where the characters are revived at twelve o'clock.

Another most ingenious little work, which probably no one living but Mr. Gilbert could have imagined, is 'Ages Ago,' produced by those excellent artists, the German Reeds, at the Gallery of Illustration. Mr. Fred. Locker has written a very charming poem entitled 'My Grandmother,' and beginning—

'This relation of mine,
Was she seventy and nine
When she died?
By the canvas may be seen
How she looked at seventeen
As a bride!

and it occurs to us as possible that Mr. Locker's poem may have given rise to Mr. Gilbert's little extravaganza, which shows how, on a certain night, the portraits in an old picture-gallery are endowed with life, and step out of their frames. Love, as well as life, animates them; and before one o'clock next morning the four personages of different centuries have merged into two couples of devoted lovers. An antique beau, painted at the age of sixty or so by Sir Joshua, becomes enamoured of a lady of a certain age, painted some generations before in the character of a shepherdess, and these two seek to check the attachment between their fellow-ghosts, who are young and ardent; but it appears that the middle-aged shepherdess lived long after the blushing little Lady May, who severely reproves her elder relative for disrespect shown to her grandmother—the grandmother in question being some thirty years younger than her granddaughter. The ancient beau and the young lord

are upon the point of fighting, only luckily the heinousness of wounding one of his remote ancestors becomes apparent to the old gentleman—indeed all the ingenious complications which spring from the idea are worked out by Mr. Gilbert. More excellent fooling than this has rarely been seen upon the stage; and clever satire on the Royal Academy, and existing institutions which lay themselves open to sarcasm, was admirably administered.

Mr. Gilbert is also generally credited with the authorship of the plays which have been signed by Mr. 'Latour Tomline.' These have generally been adaptations of Palais-Royal comedy-farces. 'The Wedding March,' which started the series, was extremely diverting; the author caught precisely that spirit of half-mad fun which made 'Le Chapeau de Paille' so great a success at its original home. 'The Blue-legged Lady' was weak and rather foolish; but there is reason to suppose that no one can adapt pieces of the Palais-Royal class with more skill. It is to be presumed that Mr. 'Latour Tomline's' name was originated that Mr. Gilbert might not seem to be connected with the authorship of 'The Happy Land,' the parody on Mr. Gilbert's mythological comedy, 'The Wicked World.' This parody, it may be remembered, was immensely successful, and contained much wit; a great deal of its popularity was owing, however, to extraneous circumstances—to the interest created by the action of the Lord Chamberlain, who forbade the actors to 'make up' to resemble Messrs. Gladstone, Lowe and Ayrton,—and the burlesque was produced at a lucky moment, just

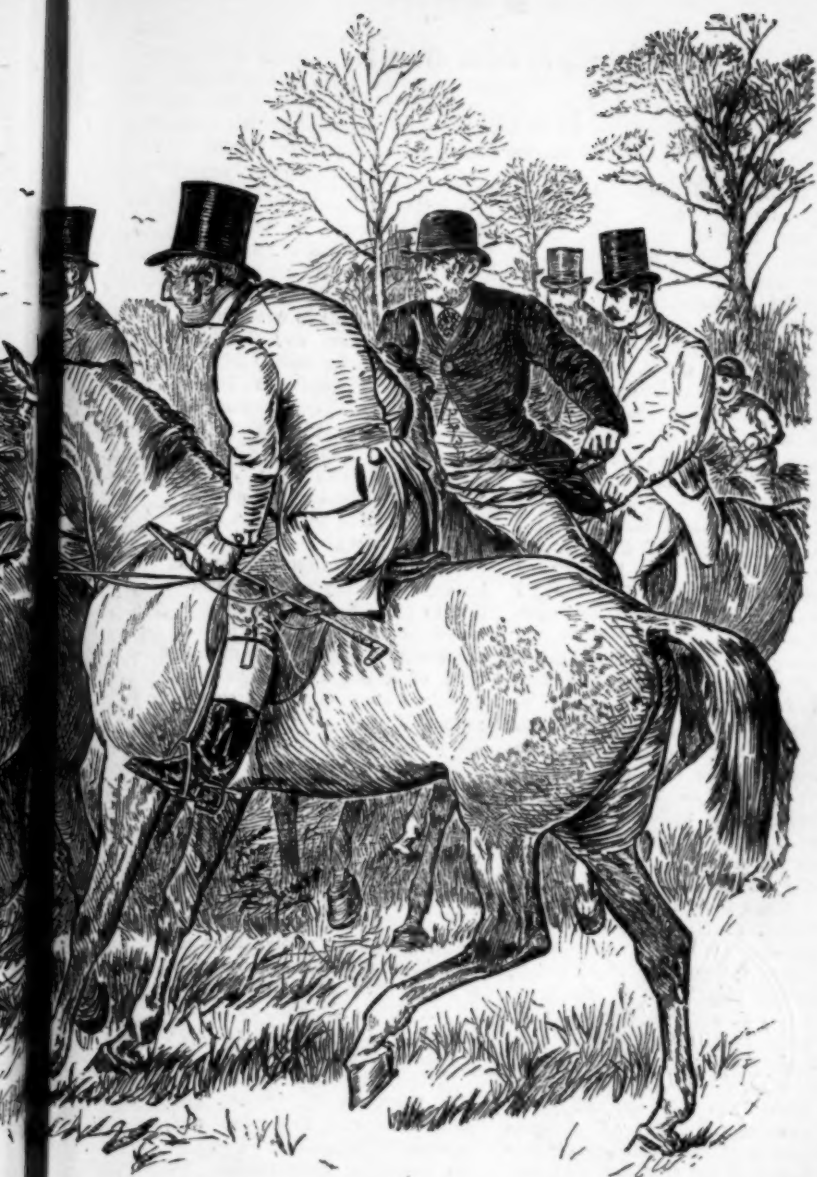
when public indignation against the late Government was beginning to assert itself.

Shakespeare made capital out of supernatural beings and mystic powers—Prospero, Titania, Ariel, Puck, indefinite Rumour and Chorus, &c.; but it is chiefly with the hopes, fears, and passions actuating mortal man that the dramatist has to deal; and, as we have said, in the comedy of modern life, Mr. Gilbert having, we cannot but believe, the power to succeed, has been unsuccessful because, despite his wit and fancy, his characters are not interesting, and their doings fail to awaken or stir the sympathies of his audience. Sheridan was ever cynical; and some of those who analyse motives deeply do not take the popular view of Charles Surface's nature; but to playgoers who have not Charles Lamb's critical brain, Charles seems generous, unselfish, and high-spirited. Sheridan strove to make him so, to the best of his power, but his own somewhat perverted sense of morality scarcely allowed him to draw a noble-minded man. He was, however, much too wise to let cynicism swamp every other quality in his work. Mr. Gilbert may assure himself that the dazzle of ready wit will not alone make a satisfactory play. When he tries to teach a lesson, as in 'Charity,' it is done in such a repulsive way as to be unsuccessful. Let Mr. Gilbert strive to take a more charitable view of human nature, and believe a little more in the possibility of goodness in his fellow-creatures. It is to be presumed that the experiences of the last year have not been thrown away upon him, and we sincerely hope that he may profit by them.

PEYTON WREY.



Drawn by R. Caldecott.]



RAPE OF THE GAMP.

CHAPTER XV.

LE VOLEUR CHEZ LUI.

CHRISTMAS came at last, though Janet had many times fancied it would never come; for these few last weeks had dragged out a very lorn and pitiful existence, as far as she was concerned. At last, however, pride, that theological vice, that social virtue, which gives nerve to so many a downcast, faltering knight, came to the rescue of Janet. Miss Lyte was still her father's guest, and intended to remain till after Christmas, meanwhile keeping open an invitation for either Janet or Nelly to return with her to Pitsville at the end of her visit; for Miss Lyte was a pleasant and sociable—alas! I was about to say 'old,' of course I mean 'middle-aged'—lady, and though belonging to what is called 'The Religious World' in that gay and fascinating resort of sinners, still managed to have a few agreeable people about her pleasant Pitsville villa, and was not at all averse to the company of a pretty and well-mannered girl, even if the gentle reprobate had as yet not been brought to see and amend the error of her ways.

Janet thought she would avail herself of Miss Lyte's kind proposal. She would not decide. Poor fluttering, longing, gentle, loving heart! If he would not come, she would go, were it merely to show him that she did not care. While she cared so much: *atra cura*—I apologize—while black care sits on her pretty rounded shoulder, and whispers such hard, dissonant phrases into her coral ear that her very gall-bladder seems to have burst and suffused her heart (were such a

catastrophe possible) with bitterness. But she *could* not promise. He might come. He might be too busy till the end of the school term. Possibly Albert had offended him. Oh, what vengeance would be sufficient to wreak upon Albert if it were so? Not, of course, to atone for Janet's misery, but merely to requite the injustice, the paltry disparagement, of one so far above it and above its author! Yet Janet did not in her heart believe that Albert could have erected a barrier over which Mr. Lane would not step lightly, without giving it a serious thought. Nor could Miss Lyte by any possibility be an obstruction to him; for she openly professed the warmest interest in and admiration of him. She was never tired of asking Janet such nice questions about him, and encouraging Hubert to speak kindly about his friend and tutor.

But now the vacation had come; indeed, some days had elapsed since the school had broken up, and Mr. Lane had gone to London without even leaving a P.P.C. card at the door, though usually he was so polite, and so particular in not omitting any courtesy, any token of respect, to Mrs. Browne. So pride came to Janet's aid. She trimmed her feathers, like any one of Mr. Lane's canaries, and made herself gay in what little sunlight the season afforded.

With Christmas came Blanche, Mrs. George Baily, junior., and Robert Browne, lieutenant and adjutant of the gallant—th, to the bosom of their family. Of Blanche suffice it to say that she was tall and fair, like Janet, but

taller, with hair more auburn, a more oval face, and a longer upper lip. Moreover, she had a melancholy air, owing, as the Pedlington quidnuncs averred (though Frank Browne stoutly denied this), to her husband's habitual neglect. Like other established belles, also, Blanche appeared to feel her existence upon the surface of the earth to be a favour ill requited by an ugly planet. But in truth our story little concerns this beautiful though not pre-eminently happy young lady, and we are scarcely justified in taking her photograph on so short an acquaintance.

Robert, familiarly termed 'The Robber' (for which endearing synonym the patient reader will presently see a reason), was a gay, burly soldier, with a broad round bronzed face, deep-set grey eyes of the twinkling order, a short light-coloured curly moustache, and whiskers to match. He looked particularly handsome with his hat on, did Robert; and perhaps the less said about his hair the better. No male member of this elegant family could baffle baldness after his twenty-first year. Albert and Frank, each in his day, had hearkened to the seductive voice of the hair-dresser, and purchased bottles of miraculous and costly preparations in vain. They had both grown sceptical. As to Robert, he was by nature a Gallio. Let the locks adorn his manly brow, or retire to his ruddy poll: it was all one to him. From the period of legal maturity baldness had crept stealthily upon each of these young men, like punishment upon the evil-doer, with slow but inevitable footsteps. You could trace its gradual progress upon the heads of Robert, Frank, and Albert, according to seniority, while the meretricious character of Mr. Browne's locks had been

obvious for more than a quarter of a century. Frank, with his usual happy turn for pleasantry, used to observe that the *capillary attraction* was all on the female side of the family: and happily the girls made up in this respect for the deficiency of their brothers; indeed, the three younger sisters were endowed with their luxuriant tresses in some of nature's most lavish moods.

On Christmas Day the whole of this estimable family adorns itself magnificently (as described in Chapter II.), and repairs to church at a quarter before eleven in the forenoon, as all respectable families in Christendom (no doubt) do. But seeing that all such families in this particular district of this particular borough occupy pews in the body of Mr. Marmaduke's church, and seeing that Mr. Browne's party is swelled by the influx of Miss Lyte, Blanche Baily, and Robert Browne, a question arises—How are all to be accommodated with seats?

Now the younger gentlemen habitually attend the old parish church. It was *the church* long before Mr. Marmaduke, or even his heroes, Wesley and Whitfield, had been born or thought of. Their conservatism was offended by Mr. Key's revival of the ancient Catholic ritual, in which perhaps he was somewhat hasty and impetuous; but nevertheless they stood by the bold little man, and sneered at the old fogies who left the church; and Janet was so charmed with the altar and the surpliced choir, and the music and the increased reverence and devoutness of the service, that latterly she had been their unfailing companion. To-day, with a strange perversity, she wanted to hear Mr. Marmaduke preach ('peach' she pronounced it). But the Robber closed his left eye,

twinkled at her with the other, and said that he would back her to go in and win, though Mr. Forsyth, the golden-tongued curate, was considered so eligible by a crowd of fair devotees. Blanche and Nelly also preferred the district church; and it must be admitted that all the cavalry soldiers with their gallant leaders made a handsome show at the latter place of worship, and that the rolling of their drums and squeaking of their fifes was a pleasant sound after the evangelist's prolix and monotonous beating of 'the pulpit, drum ecclesiastic.'

All the ladies, however, could not be furnished with seats even in Mr. Browne's ample pew, so Robert vowed himself ready to escort his 'ancient Joan,' little thinking that severe relative to be within ear-shot.

'Thank you, Robert,' said Joan, with asperity, entering the open doorway of the parlour as he spoke. At her inopportune entry Nelly exploded with laughter, in which Janet imprudently joined. Finally it was arranged that both Mrs. Browne and sister Joan should accompany the younger gentlemen.

'Ancient!' thought Joan to herself, bridleing, as she marched along. And only two minutes ago she was thinking how young and fresh her reflection in the mirror looked. 'Ancient, indeed! What idle, worthless creatures are military men! *Nothing* to do but to gad about among tittering girls, and say the *most silly* things. And *they* must needs laugh, as if they thought him witty. Absurd chits!

Then turning to her mother, Joan asked, 'Do you know why Janet refused to come to the old church to-day?'

'No, my dear,' her mother answered.

'Because the school is broken up, and Mr. Lane is going away to London,' said she of the hawk eye.

Mrs. Browne remonstrated: 'But you don't mean to say, my dear, that she goes to church to meet a gentleman, or, indeed, that Mr. Lane would do such a thing. I am sure I think them both incapable of it. I have the highest opinion of Mr. Lane.'

'And do you know,' continued the betrayer, waxing more wrathful, 'why the walk before breakfast has been discontinued?'

'I suppose it was a passing whim, and died out like so many others.' And the good lady, having said this, gave vent to her little sigh.

'Albert used to take her round by the cliff every morning; and they used to meet just here, on this very spot. I was in the churchyard one morning, speaking to Graves about dear Alfred's tablet, and I saw them.'

'You out before breakfast, Joan?' And Mrs. Browne looked at her eldest daughter with unfeigned surprise.

Joan coloured crimson, and then grew pale as marble, biting her nether lip, and resolved to speak no more, having already said so much more than she had intended. Her little triumph in betraying Janet's secret was now subdued with shame, and soon dwindled into a mere speck of spleen; for Mrs. Browne walked on briskly but silently, and smiled with amusement or some pleasurable emotion. The simple, trustful mother was merely thinking to herself, 'I wish none of my dear girls, rich or poor, a worse husband than Mr. Lane. She did not once think of him as a school drudge, or even as a man poor and strange, but as of one upright and steadfast, on whom man or woman

might rely. And so she would have said to Joan, had it not been for a suspicion of jealousy on the part of her eldest daughter, which now for the first time seriously entered her mind. As for Janet, she had enough money to marry a poor man if she wished to do so; and if she had been dowerless, still Mr. Lane had expectations, and meanwhile might make a good income, or could do so when he had graduated at Oxford. And there was no hurry for Janet to marry: she was a mere child yet.

So Mrs. Browne mused, loving her children too tenderly to wish them married, and hoping that if ever they should leave her it would be with men after her own heart. For all simple and noble characters, or what seemed such to her, this lady entertained a profound respect, and very little for mere incidental rank or wealth; and as the reader has already seen, she regarded Mr. Lane for Hubert's sake. The more she thought of him as Janet's lover, the more sunny bright grew her countenance, as though the angels' song had reached her yester-eve watching over her girls by night; and as if she had indeed come with a heart full of joy and peace to worship the King of kings on this His natal morn.

She took Hubert's arm lovingly; for the stripling was tall, and his mother short. As they entered the sacred building she whispered to Hubert, 'Show me Mr. Lane's seat.' He passed in before her; and as they swept round the north-east angle, under the painted window, Hubert, putting his hand on the finial of the bench, turned to her and smiled. So the gentle mother sat in Janet's seat, and prayed fervently for the wilful girl and her lover, whoever and wherever he might be.

But as the face of Mrs. Browne had kindled with that celestial light of love, so that of Joan had grown dark, as we say when that light fades entirely out of the human countenance.

'Sister—sold again!' Robert whispered to Frank, after staring devoutly into the crown of his hat for the space of ten seconds. 'Sold again!' The brothers had overheard a part of the conversation between the two ladies, and noticed that their mother was pleased and Joan vexed. The Robber's conscience was quite easy during his devotions, which he performed rigidly, as described in a previous chapter, although in his thoughtless mood he had first aroused that demon anger with which Joan was now possessed. However, the reader must not anticipate any tragical poisonings or poniardings. In a respectable and united family these little domestic skirmishes seldom proceed to more active hostilities. There are very few such cases on record in the archives of the county prison which is situated in the borough of Pedlington.

As you would naturally have expected from this report of the spirit which each lady took into the house of prayer, Mrs. Browne felt happier when they left church, Joan more gloomy. The young men, conscious that they had been doing the right sort of thing in the right sort of way, chuckled with self-satisfaction as they walked home to lunch.

A glorious day was that Christmas Day, frosty and bright. In the afternoon the girls accompanied their brothers for a walk. My Lord Blackpoole's park was thrown open, and they penetrated (by special permission) to 'The Happy Valley,' an inner circle from which the *plebs* were excluded.

Finches chirped and robins sang in the leafless trees. A tiny half-frozen cascade tumbled over a ledge of rock into a half-frozen lake below. The sinking sun shed a golden glow along the summits of the wood.

'Blissful resort!' sighed the Robber, with a serio-comic and reflective air. 'Reminds one of Andromache and Ænone and Aspasia, doesn't it, Frank?'

'Can't say I devote much time to the classics,' replied Frank, who was fairly puzzled at Robert's outburst of sentiment.

'Andromache, you see, was Number One,' continued the marauder, bestowing a friendly twinkle upon Nelly and Janet, which explained to their keen wit that his classical names were merely facetious adaptations. 'When a gay and sportive youth I used to meet that charmer in these classic shades. She too was young and tender. Her mother found us out, wrote an anonymous letter to the governor, and flogged Andromache, which I considered the unkindest cut of all.'

The girls voted him to be so ridiculous that he pursued the same vein. 'Ænone was Number Two,' he said. 'She used to wander forlorn in these solitary glens. I happened also to be prowling about these diggings. Consequently we met. She was the daughter of a river-god, I was told: old Pincott, in point of fact, who preserves four miles of the Thames in Oxfordshire.'

'Why, you mean Clementina!' said Janet. 'You don't mean to say she used to come out here alone to meet you?'

'By the name of Clem was she known to mortals,' continued Robert. 'I called her Ænone, and these slopes the knolls of Ida. I tumbled into this pool of reedy Simois one evening when picking

her forget-me-nots. I caught a cold. She "caught it" from her governess, and forgot me, and went back to Father Thames.'

'Why did you call her Ænone?' asked Nelly.

'Because she was always sighing for Paris, beautiful Paris!' replied the Robber, with another fraternal twinkle.

'How ridiculous you are!' exclaimed Janet. The young lady in question was a cousin of the Ormsbys, and had been on a visit to them before Robert went to India. Having at that time just returned from a boarding-school in Paris, she was in the habit of regretting her absence from that gay capital.

Frank was perhaps the only one of the party who fully appreciated Robert's pun at the moment; but Janet and Nelly referred to a classical dictionary before dinner-time, and perused Monsieur Lemprière's version of the story alluded to, which so affected Janet that she forgot all about the Robber and his witticism.

'But who was Number Three with the wonderful name?' asked Nelly, when Robert paused.

'Aspasia!' he exclaimed, smiting his breast. 'Her name haunts me still. But that sun-stroke you know, which I had at Kur-rachee—'

'Fiddlestick!' interrupted Nelly; 'Champagne-stroke, you mean.' And they all laughed except Robert. For the report of this affliction, though credited by Mrs. Browne, was considered as purely legendary and mythical by the rest of the family.

'That terrible knock-me-down,' continued the Robber, quite unabashed, 'has deprived me of all recollection of the circumstances which attended my third, last, and most fatal passion.'

So saying, Robert poked Frank

playfully in the side with his elbow, and deftly changed the subject.

'Why don't the men propose? Eh, Nelly? eh, Janet?' he asked. 'If you decoy them to this happy valley, how can they be obdurate? The very place for softly-spoken words, to the sound of falling waters, or the beating of your own hearts.'

'Perhaps the men *do* propose, you see,' said Janet, archly; 'but you can't *tell*, you see. You don't know anything about it. Does he, Nelly?'

'That's just what I say,' pursued Robert. 'If the winter wind is less unkind than man's ingratitude, as the poet has unkindly observed of a noble sex, what can equal a woman's heartless frivolity? Think of your brother, the poor war-stained, weather-beaten soldier, struck down by the tropic sun.'

'Ahem!' coughed Albert; and again they all laughed.

'Or smoking his humble cutty by the midnight camp fire——'

'More in your line,' suggested Frank.

'Or shivering in the cold dark trench, or scaling the breach in a storm of bullets, and not a letter came from either of you heartless girls to cheer the soldier in his exile. And then, when Claude Melnotte returns, you laugh, and chaff, and mock his prematurely grey hairs.'

'Bald pate, you mean,' retorted Nelly.

'Yes, my Nelly,' continued the Robber, baring his manly brow. 'Venerable absence of oakum!' here he passed his gloved hand over the barren surface. 'And that which should accompany old age, honour, obedience, and confiding sisters, I dare not look for, but in their place, chaff.'

'Shakespeare! if I am not mis-

taken,' Albert solemnly ejaculated. But the girls were not sufficiently versed in English literature to detect the Robber's garbled and fragmentary quotations. So they were unable to appreciate the covert apology in his last sentence; and Nelly flew at him like a little bantam.

'Then you shouldn't get into debt out in India!' she cried, 'giving papa epileptic fits, and making him sell money out of the Funds, when he has spent more on you than on all of us put together. And who do you think is to go barefoot and hungry to pay for your cigars, and champagne, and horses?'

At each of the three closing nouns substantive, Nelly's voice rose to a higher pitch, till she quite squeaked out the terrible word 'horses,' at the same time threatening her brother with ferocious gestures. It was a cruel attack. Twice, indeed, the Robber had outrun the constable. Each time, when fate was about to overtake him with its sure though limping footstep, a penitent letter had emerged from Mr. Browne's foreign budget. Also a lawyer's summary, containing a schedule of the prodigal's debts, in which the items specified by Nelly had figured to a considerable extent.

The veteran held his ground, however, and went on as if he had suffered no assault: 'In their place, chaff! And as I before hinted, ingratitude, more cutting than the winter wind! Janet relents, I see. The Queen of Hearts protects the Knave.'

Janet did understand this last *jeu d'esprit*, and not unnaturally appreciated it fully. The old bandit was so brave, so magnanimous, so cheery. He wouldn't even break a lance with pretty Nelly, but took her points in his

bleeding bosom, and seeing Janet's look of sympathy, turned to her with a funny compliment. Even Mr. Lane could not equal this free-booter at a pinch. And Janet did like people to be ridiculous and to amuse her. It was so tiresome being always dull and cross. The Robber did try to amuse them all, even at his own expense, and it was too bad of Nelly to attack him so fiercely. All men sowed their wild oats—at least so Frank said. But Janet did not believe it—not as Frank meant it; and having consulted her mother on this subject, was confirmed in the impression that it is your rakes and *roués* who spread the report that all men have been, or are, as they are. She knew one who never had been rake or *roué*. Still it was quite a treat to have Robert at home. She had a natural domestic sort of affection for 'the silly old thing.' 'But it is not what I call love,' she said to herself. 'I think I like him best because he is not here quite so much as the others, and because he thinks less about himself. But he is one of us; and we are all alike. It is all self, after all. I cannot reverence such a man, though he is brave and cheery; and if I can't, I won't love.'

The ill-used warrior failed to extract much information from Janet on the subject of 'Fuller's friend,' as he called Mr. Lane. He and Captain Fuller had met before, and now he only knew Mr. Lane as Hubert's tutor, and as one whom Fuller honoured with his friendship. But this irritated Janet, for she disliked the cavalry-man in spite of his gallantry to her. It was not, as Frank had erroneously conjectured, because Fuller had been a friend of Bedford Lyte's in boyhood, and still entertained a sneaking regard for that reprobate. On the contrary, she put this down

to his credit as a token of manliness and fidelity; and indeed she was disposed to give the bearded sex generally a certificate of generosity superior to that of women. But in her own mind she held a secret tribunal with closed doors, more arbitrary than any Star Chamber, more implacable than any Vehmgericht. In it she impanelled ghostly juries, employed shadowy counsellors, tried, convicted, and pronounced judgment to her own complete satisfaction on the scantiest circumstantial evidence, on concurrences of hearsay and suspicion. *A leur insu* all her acquaintances underwent this fiery ordeal, and often fared iniquitously, being unable to provide for their own defence. Already in her council-chamber had this judicial sovereign pronounced sentence of banishment from her favour upon Captain Fuller and most of his companions in arms. One by one, long ago, each of her brothers had stood in that cruel dock, against whom the evidence had been more than sufficient. Only their gentleman-like behaviour to their sisters had recommended them to mercy, and their sentence had been commuted to loss of respect, while they were retained in partial favour, as it were, on sufferance.

A certain craft or method in Robert's madness amused his sisters in their playful moods. Reports of his desperate frolics in India and elsewhere, and too palpable evidences of his extravagance, reached the quiet house in Pedlington together with printed scraps of general orders and copies of despatches attesting to his many and brilliant services. Footnotes under the roll of his regiment in the army list proclaimed his feats of valour. Ribbons and medals adorned his manly breast. Since their return from India his



RAPE OF THE GAME.

"Was in the churchyard one morning, speaking to Graves about dear Alfred's tablet, and I saw them."

bleeding bosom, and seeing Janet's look of sympathy, turned to her with a funny compliment. Even Mr. Lane could not equal this free-booter at a pinch. And Janet did like people to be ridiculous and to amuse her. It was so tiresome being always dull and cross. The Robber did try to amuse them all, even at his own expense, and it was too bad of Nelly to attack him so fiercely. All men sowed their wild oats—at least so Frank said. But Janet did not believe it—not as Frank meant it; and having consulted her mother on this subject, was confirmed in the impression that it is your rakes and *roués* who spread the report that all men have been, or are, as they are. She knew one who never had been rake or *roué*. Still it was quite a treat to have Robert at home. She had a natural domestic sort of affection for 'the silly old thing.' 'But it is not what I call love,' she said to herself. 'I think I like him best because he is not here quite so much as the others, and because he thinks less about himself. But he is one of us; and we are all alike. It is all self, after all. I cannot reverence such a man, though he is brave and cheery; and if I can't, I won't love.'

The ill-used warrior failed to extract much information from Janet on the subject of 'Fuller's friend,' as he called Mr. Lane. He and Captain Fuller had met before, and now he only knew Mr. Lane as Hubert's tutor, and as one whom Fuller honoured with his friendship. But this irritated Janet, for she disliked the cavalry-man in spite of his gallantry to her. It was not, as Frank had erroneously conjectured, because Fuller had been a friend of Bedford Lyte's in boyhood, and still entertained a sneaking regard for that reprobate. On the contrary, she put this down

to his credit as a token of manliness and fidelity; and indeed she was disposed to give the bearded sex generally a certificate of generosity superior to that of women. But in her own mind she held a secret tribunal with closed doors, more arbitrary than any Star Chamber, more implacable than any Vehmgericht. In it she impanelled ghostly juries, employed shadowy counsellors, tried, convicted, and pronounced judgment to her own complete satisfaction on the scantiest circumstantial evidence, on concurrences of hearsay and suspicion. *À leur insu*, all her acquaintances underwent this fiery ordeal, and often fared iniquitously, being unable to provide for their own defence. Already in her council-chamber had this judicial sovereign pronounced sentence of banishment from her favour upon Captain Fuller and most of his companions in arms. One by one, long ago, each of her brothers had stood in that cruel dock, against whom the evidence had been more than sufficient. Only their gentleman-like behaviour to their sisters had recommended them to mercy, and their sentence had been commuted to loss of respect, while they were retained in partial favour, as *il* were, on sufferance.

A certain craft or method in Robert's madness amused his sisters in their playful mood. Reports of his desperate frolics in India and elsewhere, and too palpable evidences of his extravagance, reached the quiet house in Pedlington together with printed scraps of general orders and copies of despatches attesting to his many and brilliant services. Post-notes under the roll of his regiment in the army list proclaimed his feats of valour. Ribbons and medals adorned his manly breast. Since their return from India his



RAPE OF THE CAMP.

'I was in the churchyard one morning, speaking to Graves about dear Alfred's tablet, and I saw them.'

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regiment had been the envy of a camp, and Robert, the adjutant, had been complimented in person by H.R.H. the Commander-in-Chief; so that although Mr. Browne had twice been constrained to sell money out of the Funds to pay his debts, Robert was in some sense an honour to his house. Lately this had been recognised by their bachelor uncle, the Squire, who had settled upon the hero an annuity of 200*l.* for life. Still he came home in a threadbare shooting-suit, with only a few shillings in his pocket, and his old tail-coat in a decrepit little valise. A very tame cat he appeared on these occasions, frequenting, as he said, the ancestral hearth and tapping the paternal swipes. He also preferred the society of his sisters to that of the men at the cavalry depôt, went anywhere with the girls or staid at home with them, and furtively showed them his collection of photographs, portraits of strange ladies in marvellous costumes; also among his arcana were curious little square pieces of pasteboard inscribed with certain hieroglyphics and the printed address of a person whom he called 'Nunky-punky.' As this name was not at all familiar to them, and this confidence was invariably accompanied with a knowing wink, Nelly explained to Janet that 'Nunky,' etc. was a dealer in second-hand watches and mosaics. They were precluded from consulting Frank or Albert on this doubtful topic, as the campaigner had previously bound them to secrecy. In short, without trespassing the bounds of strict propriety, he treated them with singular confidence and loyal consideration. In return they laughed at his penitential airs, said that he only staid at home to save his mess bills and shirk his

duty, and that as soon as he could draw any more money he would be off to his dissolute companions, gambling and riding and drinking champagne instead of paying his debts. Nelly added her firm belief was that he had defrauded that mythical relative whose grotesque cards he carried in the pocket where his watch ought to have been.

'With all your faults, however, you wicked old Bobber,' Nelly used to say—'with all your faults, we love you still.'

And they were all glad to have him at home on Christmas Day, for his merry eyes could always find something to twinkle at, and they seldom twinkled alone. Janet, as we know, though Robert knew it not, was particularly in need of some one to cheer and enliven her solitude.

CHAPTER XVI.

A MASKED BATTERY.

ON that same day of peace and good-will, at eight o'clock in the evening, dinner being disposed of and dessert placed upon the table, Mr. Browne rose, according to an ancient custom in his family, and proposed 'Absent friends!'

The governor of the feast, to his wife, who observed him with those loving eyes of hers, looked pale and careworn, but so stern and resolute a command did the brave old man exert both over features and feelings that all the others thought him gay and joyous.

Now Robert also rose, so that the two gentlemen were on their legs at the same time. Robert read little, but remembered all that he read, and much of what he heard, and was for ever quoting some poet or classic prose writer. Now closing one eye, and

looking round the table, with the other, he amended the toast: 'Friends, lovers, and countrymen,' he suggested—'especially those interesting persons in the middle.'

Mr. Browne gaily took him up. 'Absent friends, lovers, and countrymen,' he said. Then all the gentlemen stood up and drank the toast in honest port—port which had ripened under the quiet old house for twenty years and more.

Now, to the general surprise, Joan came forward. 'Suppose,' she said, 'for a little novelty and a little novel interest, we were to give a name all round?'

'Hear, hear!—name all round!' echoed the Robber.

'Very good,' responded Paterfamilias. 'I have no doubt it will conduce to general good feeling and mutual understanding.' And he smiled at Mrs. Browne, who sat opposite to him in her place at the head of the long table. She also perhaps looked rather nervous, but knew no cause for alarm; and seeing her husband apparently cheered, began herself to look brighter.

They sat at table, going round from right to left thus: Mr. Browne, Joan, Albert, Nelly, Frank; Mrs. Browne, Blanche, Robert, Janet, Hubert, Miss Lyte. The elder lady had chosen Mr. Browne's left hand to avoid sitting with her back to the door, saying that the cool air from the hall would not hurt a gentleman's covered shoulders. But the chair on Mr. Browne's right had fallen to Joan, and the Robber ruthlessly whispered to Janet that 'Sister was sold again.'

'Now then,' said Paterfamilias, in that happy vernacular so familiar to English ears—'now then, name, from right to left. I fear I cannot give you the pleasure of a surprise. You will all have guessed rightly that I drank to the head

of my family—to Uncle Robert, whose absence we all regret.'

'Thank you, sir,' Robert the benefitted cried out, with some relief, for he had purposed to name his benefactor himself, but considered that his father having done so, released him from obligation, and left the field open to adventure.

Everybody was looking at Joan, who evidently sat nerving herself for an effort. 'Being ancient,' she said, with a grim smile, 'and having no fear of being misunderstood, I drank the health of a gentleman who very naturally admires our dear Janet, and makes no effort to conceal his admiration, and I am sure with a little encouragement would——'

General disturbance and signs of disapproval, in the midst of which Robert shouted, 'Shame! shame!—name! name!'

'Oh!' continued Joan, 'if I am to be put down in this way, I decline to say any more, except that I always prefer gentlemen who have no mystery or secrecy about them——'

'Name! name!' cried Robert and Hubert in a breath.

'Captain Fuller.'

Janet blushed angrily, but Nelly, leaning forward and staring at Joan across Albert's white waistcoat, said, 'Why, my dear Joan, we have all seen through your little dissimulation long ago, and set you down for another tall man who happens to be as solemn and taciturn as a judge.'

'Thank you, Nelly,' replied Joan, with a desperate effort to look amused, but losing her colour perceptibly, and tightening her lips.

'Order, ladies, if you please!' cried Albert, rising gallantly between the combatants. 'I—ahem!—I, as you are all aware, am—a Cipher.'

'A humble cousin of Lu-cifer's,' said Frank.

'I have, as I was about to say, many agreeable acquaintances, and many—ahem!—amiable relatives, but no friends, absent or present, except my father and mother——'

'No, no!' shouted the Robber, with comic indignation.

'Excuse me, Robert,' persisted Albert gently, 'no friends except the authors of my being.'

'Quite a *Dodo solitarius*,' remarked Frank; and again general good-humour began to prevail.

'As to lovers,' Albert continued, 'I have mentioned to several attractive young ladies that if other matters or negotiations of a matrimonial tendency should not turn out according to their wishes and expectations, and if they would favour me with a few lines to that effect, I should be proud to conduct them to the hymeneal altar——'

'Old polygamist!' interrupted Frank.

'No, Frank,' resumed the orator, 'you certainly should not misunderstand me.' And Albert looked impressively at his censor, as though he could say more an if he would. But Frank was in no way perturbed. Then Albert resumed, with more care, 'Out of four or five young ladies to whom I may have addressed that observation——'

'You said you *had*, just now,' Frank calmly observed.

'Out of four or five young ladies,' poor Albert persisted, 'to whom I *have* addressed that observation, or words to that effect—let me see.' And he stood for a few seconds, bland, elegant, white-waistcoated, counting his propositions with the fingers of his right hand in the palm of his left. Having thus refreshed his memory, he proceeded: 'Out of those five, two are already—ahem!—*more than brides*.'

'Hear, hear!' shouted the Robber; and Mrs. Browne and all the young ladies laughed.

'And, as I should have said before,' continued Albert carefully, and resolved not to be laughed into further inaccuracy, 'if matters relating to a prospective matrimonial alliance should not eventuate according to *her* wishes and expectations with either of the remaining three, and that wounded heart will intrust itself to my care, its owner will have no occasion to apply to me that expression (of, I believe, Greek derivation) which Frank made use of, in his light and graceful manner, doubtless misunderstanding the tenor of my words.'

'But, my dear Albert,' said his mother, smiling upon the panting orator, 'what *have* all these revelations to do with the toast?'

'My dear mother,' he replied, 'you are all so impatient! Impetuosity, I may say, characterises this age, this borough, even this happy and united family.' (Again Mrs. Browne's watchful eye caught, or fancied that it caught, the shadow of some coming calamity on her husband's countenance. But Albert went on without apprehension.) 'The ladies to whom I have ventured to allude being either already more than brides' ('Hear, hear!') 'or about to become the brides of happier men, can scarcely be spoken or thought of as my "lovers." I have already explained that I am without absent "friends." Being, therefore, without absent friends or lovers, I drank—ahem——'

'Out with it, old Circumlocution!' cried Robert.

'I pledged my countrymen.'

And Albert sat down in the glow of rhetorical success, wiping his denuded brow with one of those fine cambric 'hankshifs' which poor little Janet had lavished her money and labour upon for him during those halcyon days when they had walked arm in arm of a morning, like brother and sister

dwelling together in unity. There were a dozen of them, at 4*l.* 16*s.* per dozen; and in the corner of each she had embroidered a Cipher so beautifully, that Messrs. Ludlam, Hill, or Harborough might have sold the handkerchiefs for a sovereign apiece.

Nelly, being called upon in her turn, and having duly blushed, laughed, and shrugged her pretty shoulders, observed to an orange on her plate that she drank to her lovers.

'Now this is becoming too general,' said Frank rising. 'I think it was a shame of Albert, considering his years and wisdom, to begin it. Nelly may be excused for following suit on account of the universality of her taste. I believe that's the correct expression. I tell her she is like a comet, you know, which has a considerable following or tail, but cannot describe a regular orbit, or seem to do so, whichever may be the case with the stars.'

Here Frank paused, and the Robber remarked, parenthetically, for Nelly's comfort, that the Milky Way was supposed to consist entirely of comets. It was all one to Nelly. She had never heard of that luminous track before.

'This,' resumed Frank, 'has been a day of revelations. Robert has already, during our afternoon ramble, given us a most affecting narrative of three of his first loves; and now——'

'Order!' Robert exclaimed; 'order! Not three of.'

'I stand corrected,' said Frank. 'He confesses to none since Number Three. "Of his three first loves," I should have said. And now Albert, our family Lothario, in graceful periods, and with a touching melancholy, like the dying perfume of a crushed flower, admits that in the course of a long and laborious career he has contrived

to spare five delicious moments to love, and left three disconsolate hearts to bewail those *engrossing cares*'—here Frank paused, but nobody saw the joke, so he went on with disgust—'which have snatched him from their embraces. Without any more palaver, then, I drank to Miss Ormsby.'

'Which?' asked Robert, lifting his glass.

'Clara!'

'Hear, hear!' the gentlemen all replied.

'The White Camellia,' said Nelly, demurely sipping her wine.

'As ladylike a girl as any in Pedlington,' remarked Mr. Browne, graciously. For still the stout old Briton held his ground.

'Proud of your approval, sir,' said Frank, again in quite a Christmas humour. 'Now for it, mamma!'

Mrs. Browne, like Nelly, showed a pretty little indisposition to confess, but at last said, in a low, clear voice, and with a pitiful face, 'I fear it may not be right. But you know it was the first glass of wine I drank since God took him. And I pledged our dear boy who is no longer on earth.'

Perhaps the good lady attributed so much of sadness and constraint as she saw in her husband's face to some recollection of this trial. As she spoke the memory of all went back to last Christmas Day, when Mrs. Browne had refused her annual glass of wine; and back from that to a sadder day in the autumn of that year, when the news arrived that Death had laid his silent finger upon a son of their house while a stranger in a foreign land. But they soon rallied. Fifteen months will heal most domestic wounds. The bounteous Hours overlay old ruins with so many gracious growths of moss and herb and

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floweret. Or else the envious Hours, sullen at our old regrets, encumber their relics with new waste and loss and ruin, so that grief is swallowed up in grief, and the old regrets have lost their power to move us.

'I am sure Mr. Key would not think it wrong, mamma,' urged Nelly. 'He invokes the saints, you know; and I think he prays to the Virgin Mary.'

'Fie, fie, my dear!' said Mrs. Browne, holding up an admonitory finger. She was surprised to see no displeasure on the pale distraught face opposite to her, removed as it was by the whole length of the table, yet never absent from her tender observation.

Here Frank drawled out, as he cracked a filbert, 'It would be rather good to tell old Marmaduke that mamma was penitent, and wanted absolution.' And the presumably horror-struck face of that minister presented itself to the imagination of his hearers, thus reviving their merriment.

Blanche next in her turn naturally said that she had pledged her absent husband, George Baily. And Robert, who happened at that moment to look toward his father, saw such an expression of pain on his countenance that he forgot all the funny things he was about to say. But attributing his father's emotion to the memory of the lost, and hoping to rouse him, he rallied, and resolved to drive dull care away.

Rising, and winking at Albert, he began: 'I am no orator, as Brutus is. Nor' (turning to Frank) 'have my manners Antinous's easy sway. I may have loved in days of yore, and may not. Heroes are but men—'

'Oh, oh!' from Frank and Albert. Scornful laughter from the girls.

'As Frank justly observes, however, I have already alluded to those attachments which were early lodged against my account in the bank of love.'

'Bravo!' cried Frank, generously forgiving the marauder for having overlooked his engrossing pun.

'Since which period of juvenile misfortunes,' continued Robert, 'the insolence of Jacks-in-office, and "the spurns that patient merit of the unworthy takes," have nearly driven the weary veteran to "his quietus make with a bare bodkin."'

'Shakespeare; Hamlet's soliloquy!' Albert gravely explained, proud of his acquaintance with the Elizabethan poets.

Then the Robber, with a quaint grin at Albert, resumed:

'The Sun of Kurrachee, however' ('Oh! oh! Hear!'), 'that fiery luminary which floored me in the land of Vishnu, scorched the soldier's brain, but left his affections untouched. And as a burned child dreads the fire, so a wounded heart shuns the wiles of alien sirens. Janet, my sympathetic, gentle sister, is now enthroned where Sophonisba or one of the other two nameless ones wields the sceptre over Albert. No rival shall displace my peerless Janet.' ('Em—em! from that young lady.') 'But of friends and brothers in arms, men formidable in the battle-field, unweary in a campaign, but in peace quiet, gentlemanly men—'

'So I should say,' Frank interposed.

'Quiet, gentlemanly men, of rather sedentary habits than otherwise—'

'Van John and écarté,' Frank suggested.

'Of rather sedentary and literary habits—of such friends I have a goodly company, whose

absence from this paternal mahogany I deplore. These I pledged in the ancestral port, and also that little remnant of my humbler fellow-countrymen, the rank and file of the gallant —th who survive the foeman's spear and the fiery darts of Phœbus.'

'Quite a Marc Antony,' said Frank approvingly, as the warrior, sitting down, turned to his neighbour, and said, 'Now for your secret, my Queen of Hearts.'

Janet made a little movement as if about to speak; then, catching a look of triumph in Joan's eye, changed her mind suddenly, and said, 'I *won't* tell.'

Her nature and habit, though not confiding, were utterly truthful. In a difficulty evasion never occurred to her mind. And it was by reckoning on her straightforward habit that Joan had calculated on dragging her secret to light.

'Come, my dear!' said mamma, encouraging her.

'Let pussy's head peep out,' said Mr. Browne kindly, and looking at her with unusual interest. 'Let pussy's head peep out. What colour is it?'

Looking at her father, she was struck with the earnest, anxious gaze he was directing toward her. She really wished to speak out candidly; but Sister's hard, cold eye, and clouds of chaff or expostulation darkening the prospect, drove her within herself. Again she said, 'No; I *won't* tell.'

'It's my turn now,' blurted out Hubert. 'And if a girl doesn't like to tell who she is thinking about, I don't see why she should be bullied. But I'll tell you all who I drank to: Mr. Lane, the jolliest fellow I ever knew, and best friend I ever had. And if you'll pass the decanter, sir, I'll give him another bumper.'

At this point Janet's hand

slipped under the table, and catching Hubert's as he sat down, squeezed it with ecstasy.

'Take another yourself, I suppose you mean,' replied papa. The good man was holding out vigorously, for his wife's and children's sake, and perhaps also in courtesy to his guest. 'But the bottle goes round the other way, my boy.'

'The Black Tulip,' said Nelly, sipping her wine. We have before mentioned the quaint love of contrast which induced her to confer this title upon Mr. Lane.

'I should not call Mr. Lane exactly "a jolly fellow,"' Hubert, said his mother; 'although your regard for him does you credit.'

'But he is a jolly fellow,' urged Hubert. 'He taught me to row properly and to swim. I should never have won that medal but for him. And you should see the boys' faces up at his class! Instead of looking cowed and stupid, as we used to do with Doctor Oldham, they all look as jolly as sand-boys.'

'Ahem,' Albert argued, 'may I inquire whether hilariousness (if there is such a word; and I beg Hubert to observe that I have no desire to carp, but that I ask for information, not being myself a scholar of profound erudition)—is hilariousness particularly conducive to scholarship?'

'I don't know,' Hubert replied. 'Pulling a long face over a sum won't make the answer come right. I know *that*.'

'No,' said Albert, smiling with an air of absolute conviction; 'no: certainly *not*.'

But as the question hovered about the domain of social ethics, Frank was moved to assert himself and maintain his autocracy. 'I have a great regard for Lane myself,' he said—'a very great regard. Indeed, I asked him to

dine here to-day.' (Janet fur-
tively started.) 'But his consti-
tution seemed to require a severe
course of fasting and psalm-
singing, and he is gone up to
what they call "A Retreat," at
the house of a parson in London.
And with all due respect to Hu-
bert's mature judgment and pene-
tration, I think Lane is, like most
religious men, of rather a me-
lancholy turn, and as proud as
Lucifer.'

The revelation of Mr. Lane's pro-
ceedings and the profundity of
Frank's observations induced a
pensive pause, after which the
Robber said, 'Not being posted in
the biography of Lucifer, my son
Berty, you may consider yourself
shut up by the family oracle. Then
Mr. Browne, turning to the lady on
his left, said, with forced gaiety,
'Last, but not by any means
least: what absent friend held the
place of honour in Miss Lyte's
regard?'

It now appeared that an un-
married lady of maturer years than
Janet or Nelly might feel embar-
rassed at such a question. Miss
Lyte visibly hesitated, and mani-
fested distress. Then looking round
the table with an appealing glance,
but avoiding Mr. Browne's eye, she
said, 'It may be well in the end,
though it is very painful to me to
speak plainly now. And I beg you
all to remember that "charity cover-
eth a multitude of sins." A
silence fraught with wonder fell
upon them all. Then the lady
went on: 'Unlike Albert, who has
so many relatives, and so few
friends, you must remember that,
while I have many kind and ex-
cellent friends (among whom I
hope *always* to reckon all of you),
I have only one relative living;
and I not unnaturally drank to my
absent nephew, Bedford Lyte.'

The pallor of Mr. Browne's coun-
tenance became absolutely livid.

Mrs. Browne stared at him, and
quaked with fear. Blanche flushed
with anger. Nelly pouted, and
turned her glass upside down in
her plate. The young men pre-
served an ominous silence.

The hostess, after a few mo-
ments' unavailing terror, caught
her guest's eye, rose, and the ladies
quitted the room.

Albert bowed them out with
stately ceremony, closed the door
noiselessly, and returned daintily
to his chair. But no sooner was
he seated than Mr. Browne, with
his most artificial smile, made
them a silent bow, and also left
the room.

'By Jove!' said Robert, 'I
thought the poor old dad would
have had another fit. How sud-
denly she unmasked her guns!
Berty, my boy, cut up and see
whether the governor's in the
drawing-room, and bring us word
what's going on.'

Hubert withdrew.

'What can be her game?' the
Robber inquired of Frank.

'Game?' repeated Frank sa-
vagely, and with a furious gesture.
'Game? Why, to fetch this scamp
back from the Antipodes, make a
will in his favour, and set some
speculating attorney on to contest
Captain Lyte's. A pretty fellow to
cram down all our throats on a
Christmas Day! I wish Balbry
had killed the d——d rascal!'

Now Albert felt some inexpli-
cable desire to take this prodigal's
part. 'Perhaps,' he timidly sug-
gested—'perhaps Miss Lyte may
be of opinion that her nephew has
already suffered enough, in loss of
fortune and reputation, for his
share in a certain deplorable trans-
action.'

'Serve him right,' retorted
Frank. 'His *share*, indeed!'

'And you will allow me to ob-
serve, Frank,' Albert continued,
waxing warm with his subject,

'that possibly—mind, I decline to say more than possibly—the lady may have been partially to blame.'

roused by opposition. 'I am not aware that any member of this family ever saw Bedford Lyte, or had any reason to thin



'Shame! shame!' shouted the Robber, more than half in fun, and hoping to provoke a quarrel between Albert and Frank.

'Excuse me, Robert,' replied Albert,

ill of him until that catastrophe happened. He bore an excellent repute at Harrow. The contest between Baily and him was a fair issue, fought openly before the w

school; and no doubt Bailly tried to thrash him, though he unfortunately failed. So far we cannot fairly condemn Lyte. But we all did see the young lady. We know that her home was distasteful to her; and we may have noticed a certain ease in her manner with gentlemen.'

Frank now broke in angrily. 'This is what I call a mean, cowardly attack,' he said; 'trying to take away the character of a beautiful and innocent girl, as Miss Bailly certainly was.'

'I beg your pardon, Frank,' rejoined the elder. 'I only wish to hold the balance evenly between two persons. Wrong there was. Why should we put it all into one scale? Do we know anything for certain?'

'No one ever denied that that fellow seduced and deserted her,' said Frank.

'Nor do I positively deny it,' said Albert. But I think, Frank, that, as a partner in a legal firm of some standing, *you* might hesitate to condemn a man without positive evidence. And this I *will* say, while we are discussing a subject painful to us all: I should be very sorry for a sister of mine to be as easy in her manner with gentlemen as Miss Bailly was.'

'Hear! hear!' cried the marauder, thundering on the table with his knuckles, and making all the glasses jingle. 'A most outrageous little flirt she was!'

Albert had already said more than he wished to say, though, on mature reflection during the last few weeks, he had concluded that Bedford Lyte had been served with scanty justice, and that there remained another version of the old,

sad story, which it would be well for all persons concerned to hear. From first to last it had been taken for granted that the absent man was chargeable with Miss Bailly's ruin. He had suffered severely in consequence, though the *à priori* evidence was against the general verdict. The Bailsys, father and son, had maintained an impenetrable reserve on the subject. Nor had Lady Balbry, the mother of the unfortunate baronet, spoken, though, by proving Lyte's guilt, she might have cleared her son's reputation; and the Bailsys might in the same way have justified the severity of Captain Lyte's will. Presently Hubert returned, with a flushed countenance.

'Here's a go! Miss Lyte is telling them a fine cock-and-a-bull story upstairs; or else the story we have always believed is a pack of lies. She says, that *Bedford Lyte* never ran away with Eleanor at all; that Sir Thomas Balbry had more to do with her ruin than any one else. And she has shown them all a letter from Lady Balbry, which has made them believe every word she says.'

'Did you see it?' Robert asked.

'Yes; but I hadn't a chance of reading it. Blanche and Janet were poring over it together, and Blanche is as pale as a ghost.'

'Is the governor upstairs?' asked Frank.

'No,' Hubert replied. 'But the worst of it is, Janet vows she will give all her fortune to that Bedford Lyte as soon as she comes of age.'

'I'm d——d if she will!' said Frank, with considerable emphasis, and left the room, grinding his teeth.

(To be continued.)

THE RISE AND FALL OF OPÉRA BOUFFE.

THE time has almost come for considering the history of the startling, merry, gay, and reckless young entertainment known as *opéra bouffe*. It has enjoyed its moment, earned its money, won its admirers, sparkled, fizzed, and gone out like many another dramatic *feu d'artifice*. It has left behind it a train of unpleasant smoke, blackening the atmosphere which it illuminated and choking the voices which applauded. But its attractions from the first were ephemeral; and never could *opéra bouffe* have obtained so much notoriety on a foreign soil had it not been introduced at a time when the dramatic tastes of the country were in an uncertain and unsettled state. There was something English, characteristic, and defined in the burlesque, which made way for the curious growth transplanted from a Parisian soil. Burlesque only died when humour gave way to careless nonsense, and when money poured in so fast that authors did not care to take pains to be simply funny. Burlesque was not driven away because artists were less capable, or dancers less skilled, or merry music too difficult to be obtained; but because the humour which was apparent in the old burlesques ceased to exist, and the public began to see that the authors were laughing at them, instead of their laughing at the authors. In the history of the rise and fall of burlesque, the names of the Brouchs, Talfourd, Byron, and Burnand must ever be held in conspicuous respect; and though, before the decline, many of us have assisted at sorry spectacles, we are none of us likely to forget those genuine and hearty humorists who for years supplied

the Olympic, Strand, and Royalty theatres with cheery, genuine, and inoffensive amusements. The public which remembered Robson and James Rogers, David James and Thorne, Terry and Dewar, John Clarke and Toole, Miss Wyndham, Marie Wilton, Fanny Josephs, Louise Keeley, and Mrs. Mellon, did not resign burlesque without a sigh; but such artists as these reigned in days before nonsense-songs and gibberish ballads, and flourished at a time when old English melody and epigrammatic neatness of verse were preferred to the vulgarity of the music hall and the extravagance of the modern negro serenader. At no time, however, was the entertainment known as *opéra bouffe* identified with English art or English taste. It was Parisian and anti-English to the backbone. We took it up because our own humour was not pronounced, and because we were swayed and influenced by the siren voices of the light French melodists. We could hear nothing but the music, and, for the sake of the music, we either refused to listen to the words or cheerfully forgave the uncongenial humour of the French libretti. 'Orpheus' and 'The Grand Duchess,' the 'Beautiful Helen' and 'Blue Beard,' the 'Little Faust' and 'Chilpéric'—we welcomed them all for their captivating melodies or feverish dances; and the madness, in time, became so violent, that there were some who advocated the introduction of the 'Timbale d'Argent,' and 'Héloïse and Abelard'—two of the most scandalous operas that ever disgraced the stage of a civilized country. In a few short years, *opéra bouffe* has risen, flourished, and declined in England.

A stage which prided itself, somewhat puritanically and ostentatiously, on its purity, has been handed over to 'cancan' dancers and feeble imitators of the poor paid creatures who kick up their heels at Mabilles and Ballier's; enormous sums of money have been expended on scenery which had no definite object, and on dresses for many who used the stage as an advertisement; and the playgoers of the metropolis have stared aghast at speculations which must have been as disastrous as the failure of the performers was complete.

It may sound paradoxical to state—but it is none the less true—that the first and best performances of *opéra bouffe* were given in this country at a place where theatrical entertainments were not permitted and the true spirit of the amusement could not be attempted. The first notes of Offenbach fell on the English ear in the Oxford Music Hall and at the Canterbury Hall. Those really pleasant selections from the little operetta called '66,' the carefully-chosen *pot-pourris* from the 'Orphée aux Enfers' and other Offenbachian operas, cannot have been forgotten. Long before Offenbach was seen in a regular theatre, Miss Russell was enchanting us with the rich notes of her luscious voice; Mr. St. Aubyn was taking the tenor music with great skill; Mr. Green was showing a rare fund of sly humour, in addition to the possession of a fine bass voice; and a lady, afterwards known as Miss Soldene, was gradually forcing her talent into notice. A sound and genuine entertainment is sure to attract attention wherever it is given. Playgoers and music lovers soon began talking of the operatic selections at the 'Oxford.' Miss Russell and Miss Fitz-Henry were feted and applauded like prima

donnas; anxious and appreciative eyes watched Mr. St. Aubyn and the famous Mr. Green into the broughams which were to convey them and their conductor, Mr. Jonghmans, to some far-distant place of amusement; and the wonderful song about 'Le Savetier et le Financier' was whistled all over London.

The accident of the Paris Exhibition gave the first impetus to the taste for *opéra bouffe* in this country. At that time Schneider was in her glory, and crowned heads were struggling to see the diamonds and applaud the cleverness of 'La Grande Duchesse de Gerolstein.' Where the world went, there, of course, the English folks were found; and those who were unable to be present in Paris besought their friends to bring home a score of the popular opera. Once started, the fever spread rapidly. Journeys to Paris became more popular after the Exhibition, and each one who came back home again was laden with the treasures of Offenbach or Hervé. Photographs of the burlesque actresses of Paris, songs, scores, and dances poured in upon us, and there was no dance in the Season or at Christmas time that we did not find ourselves jigging to the irresistible French composers of the hour. And who do you think was the first author, or among the first, who offered his arm to the young lady whose beauty was so soon destined to fade? Who was the gallant cavalier who escorted Mdlle. *Opéra-Bouffe* on the English stage? None other than Jas. Robinson Planché, the charming story-teller of our childhood, whose 'Island of Jewels,' 'King of the Peacocks,' and 'King Charming' linger on the memory with a clearness and a fascination which no time nor circumstances can efface. It was Mr. Planché who, after a nine years' absence

from the stage which he had so conspicuously adorned, returned to see what his cunning hand and faultless taste could do with the French book of the 'Orphée aux Enfers,' to which Offenbach had set the score, which is still among the most popular which has ever proceeded from his pen. I prefer to give the story of Mr. Planché's connection with Offenbach in his own words:—"In September this year (1865) I was applied to by Mr. Buckstone to adapt for him Offenbach's opéra bouffe "Orphée aux Enfers," with a view to the first appearance at the Haymarket of Miss Louise Keeley, who he promised should be adequately supported by vocalists he would engage expressly for the piece, there not being one in the company who professed to sing operatic music. It was necessary, also, that Orpheus should play the violin, and there were other difficulties to be got over. The good intentions of Mr. Buckstone, however, only went the way of cartloads of similar materials, to pave the regions we were about to lay the scene of in the Haymarket, and failed to induce any singers of celebrity to set their feet on them. I was so accustomed, however, to this sort of disappointment in an English theatre, that it did not much disconcert me. I wrote the piece as well as I could, and got it acted as well as I could; William Farren, who had received a musical education, making a pleasant Jupiter, Mrs. Chippendale a splendid jealous Juno, Miss Helen Howard representing Public Opinion in a style calculated to obtain its favourite verdict, and an old favourite and true artist, Mr. David Fisher, playing Orpheus with intelligence and "the fiddle like an angel." Miss Louise Keeley was a charming Eurydice, and sang like a nightingale; so, with the addi-

tion of pretty scenery, pretty dresses, and some pretty faces, we pulled through pretty well. It was not Offenbach's opera, but the piece went merrily with the audience, and ran from Christmas to Easter. As far as I was concerned, the press was most laudatory, and welcomed my appearance as a writer of extravaganza, after a lapse of nine years, with a cordiality that was extremely gratifying to me, considering the change that in the meanwhile had come over the spirit of that class of entertainment.'

It had been well for our stage if authors of Mr. Planché's eminence, and artists with such faultless taste and welcome expression as Miss Louise Keeley, had continued their services. The one could write and the other could sing—gifts which in these latter days have not always been considered absolutely essential.

The great difficulty which English managers have experienced in dealing with or transplanting Parisian *bouffe* operas has been connected with the framework or idea of the composition. They were glad enough to take the music and the dances. No harm could possibly come out of them, save hindering musical taste and education—a subject which did not vastly concern English theatrical managers. That which was constantly heard in ball-rooms and at dinner parties, the melodies which were chosen by the bands of the Guards and in all garrison towns, could well be reproduced on the stage. But the idea or motive of Parisian opéra bouffe must have puzzled many an experienced manager. Had any author come forward to write original, or at any rate decent, books to the popular music, he would assuredly have made his fortune. All the managers wanted was somebody who could fit the

music with a funny and clever book. What they could get was the clever and facile gentleman who could write elegant lyrics and skate gingerly over very thin ice. What they wanted was some one who could construct a new edifice altogether for the music, which was sure to take on its own merits. No one can deny the excellent humour of such travesties as the 'Orphée aux Enfers' and the 'Belle Hélène.' But it was humour which did not suit us in the least. It was as out of place and awkward as those English tumblers pretending to dance what they are pleased to call the 'cancan' on the stage of a London theatre. Paris life is altogether different from London life. Over there we enjoy claret, the eleven o'clock breakfast—we fall into the manners and customs of the place. We feel lazy, we like lounging, and we are caught sitting outside the Café Reale taking a glass of absinthe and a cigarette before dinner. We say to ourselves there is nothing like the Parisian life. We vow that we will commence dinner at home with sardines and radishes; but the very instant the train arrives at Charing Cross we call for a glass of stout, and hurry off to Simpson's for a cut off the joint and a taste of English mutton. French humour of this pattern does not suit our climate or our constitution, and all the attempts hitherto made to reproduce these stories have resulted in comparative failure. We do not like or appreciate the 'motive' which runs through these stories, and we should be far more indignant at them if we took the trouble to ascertain what they were about. As a rule, English audiences do not take the trouble to make any inquiries about the tale which is being recited. How many playgoers could say what the Grand Duchess experienced, or

could accurately detail the sorrows or the fortunes of Madame Angot's daughter? Audiences, as a rule, care next to nothing about the story of operas. They go to the 'Huguenots,' the 'Sonnambula,' 'Don Giovanni,' 'Lucresia Borgia,' and the rest of them, without troubling their heads about the book, or even studying the argument. They want to listen to the music, and no more. It is needless to say that the English adaptors take pains to suppress as far as possible the very points which are prominently brought forward in France. If this were not so, it is impossible that young girls could be permitted to sit out an average opéra-bouffe performance. In France they never go to such entertainments, and yet we pride ourselves on our excessive virtue. For the indelicate key which runs through all these entertainments is pretty much the same on all occasions. It is repeated *ad nauseam*. The Grand Duchess falls in love with a stalwart soldier in her army, and begins pawing him about. For the sake of the flattery of the Grand Duchess, Fritz deserts poor Wanda. The Greek nabob and governor of a province casts his eyes upon La Perichole, and straightway the pretty gipsy girl deserts her husband and her child for the sake of illicit gain. An Island of Bachelors is in existence in the middle of the ocean, and behold, the governor, the sub-governor, and all the inhabitants are in a frantic state of excitement at the announcement of the arrival of a ship whose cargo is a hundred virgins. Clairette jilts a humble barber for Ange Pitou, and straightway her friend and school-fellow, Mdlle. Lange, makes frantic and indelicate love to poor Clairette's lover. Bashful youths run away from their tutors, and are found to be debauched young

ruffians before their beards have grown.

Tickled with the success of these risky positions and daring situations, over which the Frenchmen (not the Frenchwomen, for they are not there) lick their lips, the authors go still farther, and in the 'Timbale d'Argent' and 'Héloïse et Abelard' tell stories which would not be tolerated after dinner in any mixed society of English gentlemen. The humour which cannot be related to ladies is useless in England, where, happily, ladies attend theatres without question; and so the books of the English versions of French opéras bouffes have been found tedious, after a careful process of Bowdlerism. Failing a good funny story, success has had to be obtained by the trick, or gag, or clever business of an actor or actors. The 'Princesse de Trébizonde' was made popular by Mr. Toole's 'gags' ('Keep your eye on your father!') and his admirable business. These things told more than the charming hunting chorus, or the winning duet, 'Ah! se ne tente pas,' or the chorus of pages, a lovely number. 'Genevieve de Brabant' will be remembered more for the duet of gendarmes than for any story or singing.

It was from the first useless to attempt to reproduce the spirit of these entertainments, which was found so popular in Paris. The only thing that ever could be done to add attraction to the welcome music is now being done, and has been done for some time past, by Mr. H. B. Farnie. It is true that this author is unable to build a play for himself, or to compose an original story; but he does the next best thing. He takes a good French farce, and amalgamates it pleasantly with the popular and charming music. There is very little harm in this, if it is cleverly carried out. The best English

farces have a French origin, and a distinct French origin. Our old friend 'Box and Cox' is a combination of 'Frisette' and 'Une Chambrea Deux Lits.' 'Woodcock's Little Game' is a French play, and so is the 'Spitalfields Weaver' ('Bruns le Fileur'). If to a really merry French farce, which is capable of being turned to an English account, the best and sweetest available music can be added, the public is decidedly the gainer.

'Nemesis,' at the Strand, and subsequent plays, prove sufficiently that Mr. Farnie's plan is a correct one. His musical selection is excellent; and though it may be urged that original plays would be preferable, and collaboration perhaps desirable, still the original plays are not forthcoming, and collaboration is still distasteful to English authors. The 'comedy-bouffe' principle is at any rate a long step in the direction of getting good musical farces and original musical burlesques. We may yet hope for a revival of the old English burletta, and of plays like 'The Turnpike Gate,' where poetry, lyrics, and pretty music were pleasantly combined. When we turn over the leaves of our mother's old music books we shall find that some of the most popular old English airs were first written for the stage. If we cannot start a comic opera of our own, we at any rate revive some taste for English songs and ballads. The time may be far distant, but if opéra bouffe has indirectly started a taste for dramatic music, many of its sins may cheerfully be forgiven.

A popular writer has already pointed out that we possess in England the nucleus of an excellent school of *bouffe* artists. No one can deny it. The artists who can sing and act, who are witty and bright, who have received a musical education and understand

the art of expression could support excellently one, and, at the most, two theatres. The forced enthusiasm for opéra bouffe, under any circumstances, under any conditions, with or without musical talent, education, or taste, must be ascribed to other reasons, which I shall propose to discuss presently. It is notorious, at any rate, that, as a rule, the English idea of theatrical management resembles the conduct of children over their toys. If one has a doll, the other must have a doll. If one is presented with a puzzle, the other refuses to be amused with a Noah's Ark. Sex, condition, circumstances, and age are immaterial. All must be alike. Thus, opéra bouffe, successful at one house, is instantly imitated at another. Shakespeare is played under certain conditions at one theatre: it is put up at another regardless of conditions. Directly the 'School for Scandal' is discovered to have some vitality, the 'School for Scandal' and the old comedies are played and revived all over London. If a new author makes a mark—always under certain conditions—he is instantly overwhelmed with orders for a comedy, a drama, a melodrama, a burlesque, or a contest for a hippodrome! He is the man of the moment, and he must be worked and ruined. There is some art required in cutting a coat or making a cabinet, but the manager's art appears to be ordering a play from a successful author, taking up the craze of the hour, and gambling recklessly for a success, which may turn up trumps, but very often does precisely the reverse.

The manager who can conscientiously make up more than two good opéra-bouffe companies out of the present available talent must indeed be a very sanguine

person. Voices are an inheritance and not the result of manufacture. We cannot order young tenors and ladies who can sing in tune like lengths of muslin for the ballet or paint-pots for the scenic artists, and to put up such entertainments without the talent is to tempt the indulgence of a far too lenient public. I am perfectly aware of the many instances of individual talent. If Miss Louise Keeley, with her voice and knowledge of the rare art of singing, which is a very different thing, had remained on the stage, she would have been worth her weight in gold at these times. I can heartily appreciate the art of Miss Julia Matthews, the grace of Miss Lydia Thompson, the singing of Miss Loseby. I don't believe Peschard herself ever expressed a song much better than Miss Soldene did 'Sleep on! sleep on! my Queen,' when she was in good voice, in the original Genevieve days at the Philharmonic, and no Planché tunes at the Lyceum, or any extravaganza acting that I ever had the honour of seeing, ever came up to the vocal and acting art of Miss Soldene and Miss Dolaro in the second act of 'Fleur de Lys.' Judic and Peschard could not have played this scene better. It was a triumph of unexaggerated expression. With such artists as these, and the addition of ladies like Madame Rita, excellent work might be done; but the talent is scattered instead of being concentrated. One or even two swallows do not make a summer.

The showiness and attractiveness of opéra bouffe have worked its downfall and caused the scandals which have been deplored. If we were more artistic it would not have been so. Opéra bouffe has the sad advantage of necessitating pretty and occasionally

seanty dresses. Women are not proof against such advantages, and many who would not have dreamed of study for the stage are content to appear and show themselves off upon it. Study is required for the education of an artist; money is alone required for the embarkation of a 'popular actress.' The money is always forthcoming. An artist who desired to found a comedy school, or encourage the dramatic fine art, might whistle for a capitalist. But Miss Rosie de Vere can have as many thousands as she likes. The public will be told that Miss Rosie de Vere can sing and act, and the public will gradually believe it. First, she will be admired for her taste in dress. It has been done for her by a milliner. Then, after hard struggles and practice she will battle with a song. How she has improved! Why she could not speak her native English the other day! She can aspirate and can sing in tune. What art! what cleverness! Rosie de Vere thus becomes one of the 'popular actresses' of the day. Her picture is in the shop-windows. Ten to one she becomes a manageress, and the poor artists who have worked bravely all their lives are driven away into the country and must hide their diminished heads!

There are a thousand advantages in opéra bouffe, many of them very dear to the manager. A large staff of ladies is necessary. It is not impossible that each lady possesses, or can acquire, a little capital. It is all grist to the mill. Never mind if they can sing or not, talk or not, speak or not, dance or not, move or not. Miss Polonaise of the establishment will fit them with nice dresses. They will come on in a crowd, and the critics will say that the piece is beautifully

mounted and bright with pretty faces. They will all drive to the photographer; they will all appear as 'popular actresses,' and when the money is exhausted the theatre will pass to other hands, to fresh capitalists, and new favourites.

It is of this form of opéra bouffe that I think the public is getting a little tired. The first night is very enchanting; the bouquets are of the best and dearest; the accounts in the papers are apparently very flattering; the preparatory dinner was a great success. All goes well until the capital is exhausted and the candle burns down to the socket. But the spectacle is no more edifying than the scene in Hogarth's picture.

The evil has happily worked its own cure, or there is, at any rate, a tendency and disposition for better things. In other countries, where they more keenly appreciate art, it is possible that audiences might have resented some of the recent impertinences which have alike distressed all who take an interest in the stage and those good artists and true who have remained faithful to the ship. It is within the bounds of probability, that if an opera had been played elsewhere with scarcely one number throughout the performance being sung in tune, and with scarcely one on the stage with the faintest notion of acting, some more decided verdict would have been given than satirical applause. It is better perhaps, however, that a silent and expressed condemnation has been registered. Disturbances of all kinds are unseemly and to be avoided, and it is in the nature of men to be argumentative and cantankerous when such things happen. However sound an opinion may be, there is always

some one found who is disposed to argue on the other side.

However, when 'night is darkest dawn is nearest,' and with the decline of opéra bouffe in its English dress may be reasonably ex-

pected a recall of the banished artists, an impetus in the direction of faithful and honest work, and an overthrow of the monopoly of bad taste.

CLEMENT W. SCOTT.



BOXING NIGHT.

F O G.

DAMP fog o'er the city is creeping,
 Yellow with smoke and stain ;
 The very heavens are weeping,
 Methinks, in this mist-like rain.

Chill are the streets, and dismal,
 And dark and darker grows
 The air—till a gloom abysmal
 O'er all things seems to close.

E'en the goldsmiths' glittering cases
 In the shops seem blurr'd and dim,
 And one shudders at some of the faces
 One meets—they look so grim.

'Tis a fearful night, and the river
 Rolls a deeper flood, they say,
 Than the oldest waterman ever
 Saw rush on its seaward way ;

And on Waterloo Bridge here, sitting
 By the keeper's turning-stile,
 You may hear the fierce tide splitting
 Below 'gainst the granite pile.

What was that ?—a most rapid walker,
 Surely, and careless withal,
 And a curious muttering talker—
 Ugh ! this fog settles down like a pall !

And his face was wild and haggard—
 A face to set one to think—
 And he seemed as though he stagger'd—
 Stagger'd, but not with drink.

By Heaven ! he's here above us,
 On the parapet ! Haste thee, run,
 Keeper, or—Jesu love us !—
 A fearful deed will be done.

Too late ! See, his hands uplifting,
 With a shriek he disappears,
 And his body, whirling and drifting,
 And dash'd 'gainst the solid piers,

Perchance, all mangl'd and broken,
In foul ooze will be flung by the tide,
And a bitter word will be spoken—
‘Another vile suicide!’

But, before harangue or stricture,
My lord or lady, I pray,
Turn a glance on this other picture—
Its like you may see any day.

* * * * *

This poor heap was a Spitalfields weaver,
Had wife and fair children five,
But the want-born poison of Fever,
Left him but one alive;

And for weeks, from early morning,
He has sought for work in vain,
The detested workhouse scorning
None heard him greatly complain.

But to-day his last little daughter
Our Saviour was pleased to call,
And despair, as the fog on the water,
Settled down on his heart like a pall.

Then through this dark murky city
He fled from his cruel woes,
Ending them thus. Found he pity
From Heaven? Heaven only knows.

J. W. T.



SPORTING ADVENTURES OF CHARLES CARRINGTON, ESQ.

By 'OLD CALABAR.'

READER, must I confess it? I am a Cockney, born and bred in the 'little village.' Though I passed some eight or ten years in a Government office, yet my heart was not in the work. I had often illnesses, which kept me away; those days—must I own it?—were generally spent in a punt at Weybridge with one of the Keens. At Walton or Halliford I was great in a Thames punt; and I then imagined few could hold a candle to me in a gudgeon or roach swim; that I was the fisherman of England, *par excellence*. I am wiser now.

At last my absences from office were so frequent that I had quiet intimation to go; but, having friends who were pretty high in office, I got an annuity in the shape of ninety pounds a year. A fresh berth was procured for me at four hundred per annum, where I had a good deal of running about. This suited me much better, as it enabled me to indulge in my proclivities. I now took to shooting, and rather gave fishing the go-by.

I believe I tormented every gun-maker in the West End to death. I was continually chopping and changing, inventing fresh heel-plates to the 'stocks.' I would have a thick one of horn for a thin coat, and a thin one of metal for a thick coat. Then I had them made with springs to diminish the recoil. I was laughed at by every one who knew anything about the matter; but I was so eaten up by self-conceit that I imagined no one was *au fait* at guns but myself, and would take

no advice. My shooting was not what a sportsman would call 'good form'; but this I did not believe.

'Dash it, Muster Carrington,' said an old Somersetshire farmer to me one day; 'always a-firing into the brown on 'em, and mizzing the lot. It can't be the gun, or because you wear gig-lamps. You're no shot, zur, and never will be;' but I laughed at the old fellow's ignorance. Rather rich that. I, with one of Grant's best guns, not a shot—rub-bish! But I determined I would make myself a shot; so I went over to Ireland to an old friend of mine, who lived in a wild, remote part of Galway. He was a first-class sportsman in every way; took great pains with me, and taught me a good deal. I learnt to ride to hounds with him, not well certainly, but in my vanity I soon imagined I not only rode, but shot better than my instructor. One day, after shooting at twenty-three snipes, and only killing one, and the next missing thirteen rabbits, turned out from the keeper's pockets, I was fain to admit I was not the shot I thought myself; so I betook myself back to London—a sadder, but not a wiser man. I then entered one of the pigeon clubs. Pigeon club? it was one. I won't say anything about that. If I had gone on with it I should soon have had pockets to let. I was terribly laughed at by every one, for I could neither shoot nor make anything by betting.

I then determined to try hunting, and wrote to my old friend in Ireland to procure me a couple of

horses. This he did, and sent me a couple of good ones. I enjoyed the hunting more than I did the shooting, because I could ride a little, and got on better.

Sending my horses down to the country one fine morning, the next I followed them to —, where I had taken a little box for the season. Many and oft were my mishaps during the few months I was there.

I was in the famous run I am about to relate, and one of the unfortunate victims who came to grief on that occasion.

In the county of Croppershire, and not far from the little post town of Craneford, a pack of foxhounds was kennelled: they were under the joint mastership of two gentlemen, Samuel Head, Esq., commonly called Soft Head, and Henry Over, Esq., who was usually designated Hi Over; the secretary was George Heels: he went by the name of Greasy Heels.

A local wag had nicknamed it the 'Head-over-heels Hunt'; but another aristocratic gentleman and a public-school man said that a much more *distingué* and appropriate title would be the classical one of the *Sternum-super-caput* Hunt. This it was ever afterwards called; and certainly no hunt deserved the name better, for hardly a man amongst the whole lot could ride; they were ever being *grassed*, or 'coming to grief.'

Men from the next county used to say to each other, 'Old fellow, I am in for a lark to-morrow. I'm going to see the "Sternum" dogs;' or, 'I am going to drive the ladies over next week, when the Sternum hounds meet at the cross-roads; they want a laugh, and to see a few falls.'

The huntsman to these hounds was John Slowman. He was not a brilliant huntsman, but he could ride; he had no voice; could not

blow the horn well, which was, perhaps, a lucky thing.

Somehow or other the Sternum hounds generally killed, and had a great many more noses nailed to their kennel-door than most of the neighbouring packs. The great secret of their success was that the hounds were *let alone*; they never looked for halloas or lifting, and if they did they very seldom got it. They were great lumbering, throaty, slack-jointed, flat-sided animals; but they could hunt if let alone, and often carried a good head, and went along at a pretty good bat too; and as they had but few men who rode up to them, they were not as a rule pressed or over-ridden.

The Sternum gentlemen were great at roads, though now and then they would take it into their heads to ride like mad, especially when there was any one from a neighbouring hunt to watch their proceedings. Then there were riderless horses in all directions, for the country was a stiff one, and took a deal of doing.

'Ah, gentleman,' Slowman would exclaim, as the field came thundering up ten minutes after a fox had been broken up, 'you should have been here a little sooner; you should indeed. Mag—nificent from find to finish. Don't talk to me of the Dooks, or the Belvoir, or the Pytchley either, nor none of them hunts as have three packs to keep 'em agoing. Give me two days a week, and such a lot of dogs as these. I dessay the Markis will make a huntsman in time. Frank Gillard ain't a bad man, and Captain Anstruther is pretty tidy; but there's too much hol-lerin', too much horn, too much lifting and flashing over the line. They mobs their foxes to death; I kills mine.'

Slowman was magnificent at these times, and felt more than

gratified when compliments were showered on him on all sides.

'Right you are, Slowman.' 'You know how to do the trick, old fellow.' 'Best huntsman in Europe.' 'There's half-a-sovereign to drink my health.'

Then Slowman would collect his hounds, nod to the whips, and return home a proud and happy man.

The Sternum hounds hunted a week later than their neighbours, and at the two meets that took place during that period they generally had large fields, and always on the last day of the season, because Messrs. Head and Over gave a grand breakfast.

On the occasion I am about to speak of, the last day of the season, a breakfast was to be given of more than usual magnificence. The hounds had had a good season, and the masters determined that they would be even more lavish than usual.

Great were the preparations made when it was known that the neighbouring hunts were coming in force to see them, and have one more gallop before they put their beloved pinks away in lavender.

Slowman, the huntsman, the evening before the eventful day, had gone through the kennels, made his draft for the following morning, looked to the stables, and given orders about the horses and other little matters pertaining to his craft.

He was seated by his cosy fire, and in a cosy arm-chair, puffing meditatively at a churchwarden, and now and then taking a sip from a glass of hot gin-and-water that stood at his elbow. 'Bell's Life' was at his feet, and before the fire lay a couple of varmint-looking fox terriers. Slowman was thoroughly enjoying himself, and wondering if the six-acred

oak spinny which they were to draw first the next morning would hold a good stout fox.

'John,' said his wife, bustling into the room, 'Captain Martain-gail wishes to know if he can see you an instant: he is on his horse at the door.'

'Lord bless me, Mary! surely,' sticking his feet into his slippers and rushing to the front door. The Captain was a favourite of his. The gin he was drinking was a present to him from the Captain; the 'Bell's Life' was the Captain's. The Captain always came of a Sunday for a chat and look through the kennels; and the Captain was one of the very few of the hunt who could ride. He always gave Slowman a fiver at the end of the season, and many good tips besides; so he was a prime favourite with the huntsman.

'Good evening, good evening, Captain,' said Slowman, going to the door. 'Come in, sir. Here, Thumas—Bill—Jim—some of you come here and take the Captain's horse. Throw a couple of rugs over him and put him in the four-stall stable, take his bridle off, and give him a feed of corn.'

'Now, sir, come in,' as the Captain descended from his hack and gave it to one of the lads. 'I was just having a smoke, sir, and a glass of gin-and-water—your gin, sir; and good it is, too.'

'That's right, Slowman. And I don't care if I take one with you. It's devilish cold, but no frost. I want to have a talk with you about to-morrow.'

Taking the arm-chair, he mixed himself a glass of liquor, and lit a cigar.

'Slowman,' he commenced, 'there's the devil's own lot of people coming to-morrow. There's Jack Spraggon, from Lord Scamperdale's hunt. He's sent on

Daddy Longlegs, his Lordship's best horse, and another; so *he* means going. Jealous devil *he* is, too. Soapy Sponge will be here with Hercules and Multum in Parvo; old Jawleyford, and a host of others of that lot. Then there's Lord Wildrace, Sir Harry Clear-all, and God knows who besides. There's more than forty horses in Craneford now—every stall and stable engaged; and there will be twice as many in the morning.'

'Ah! sir, it's the breakfast as brings 'em—at least, a great many of 'em.'

'Well, I daresay that has something to do with it,' replied the Captain; 'but a great many come to have a laugh at us. The fact is, most of our men can't ride a d——. Then look at Head and Over, they are always coming to grief and falling off. No wonder they get laughed at. And most of the others, too. There will be no end of ladies out, too, and all to have a grin at us. Oh! by-the-way, Slowman, here is your tip. I may just as well give it to you to-night as later. I've made it ten instead of five this year, because you've shown us such prime sport.'

'Very much obliged to you, Captain, indeed,' thrusting the note into his pocket; 'and for your kind opinion too. I try to show what sport I can, and always will. So they're coming to have a laugh at us, are they! I wish we may find a good stout fox, and choke all the jealous beggars off. I'd give this ten-pound note to do it,' slapping his pocket.

'It may be done, Slowman,' replied the Captain cautiously; 'in fact, I may say I have done it. But you must back me up; and, mind, never a word.'

'I'm mum, sir. Mum as a gravestone.'

'Well, you see, Slowman, having found out what they are coming for, I've a pill for them. You draw the six-acre oak spinny first. Well, there will be a *drag* from that over the stiffest country to Bolton Mill. That's eight miles as the crow flies. There, under the lee of a hedge, will be old Towler with a fresh-caught fox from their own country. As he hears the hounds coming up he will let him loose. He's not one of your three-legged ones, but a fresh one, caught only this afternoon. I've seen him—such a trimmer! He'll lead them straight away for their own country. And if the strangers, and old Spraggon, and Jawleyford, and all the rest of them can see it through, they are better men than I take them to be. I shall have my second horse ready for me at the mill. And so had you better. I'll take the conceit out of the beggars.'

'By the living Harry!' exclaimed the huntsman, 'a grand idea. I must draft Conqueror, Madcap, and Rasselas. They are dead on drags. But, Captain, if the governors twig it?'

'Not a bit, Slowman. They, as you know, won't go four miles.'

'Yes, sir, yes. I know all that. But if they should twig? They have the coin, you know.' The huntsman had his eye to the main chance.

'But they will not, Slowman. Now, I will tell you a secret; but, mind, it's between ourselves. Honour, you know.'

'Honour bright, Captain,' replied the huntsman, laying his hand on his heart.

'Well, then, to-morrow at breakfast, Head and Over will announce their intention of resigning.'

'No, sir; you don't mean it?' said the huntsman hastily.

'I do,' replied the Captain.

'And I am going to take them on, and you too. I am to be your M.F.H. It's all cut and dried. So you see you run no risk. But not a word of this.'

The huntsman sat, with his mouth open, and at last uttered, 'Dash my boots and tops, Captain, but you are a trimmer! But,' he continued, 'if we should find a fox before we come on the drag?'

'But you will not, Slowman. The cover is mine, and has been well hunted through to-day, and will be to-morrow morning again. No fox will be found there.'

The two sat for an hour and more talking and arranging matters, so that there might be no failure on the morrow. And all having been satisfactorily arranged, the Captain mounted his horse, and rode home.

The following morning—the last of the season—was all that could be desired. A grey day with a southerly breeze. It was mild for the time of year. Great were the preparations at Mr. Head's house. He gave the breakfast one year. Over the next. It was turn and turn about.

As it was the last breakfast he was to give as an M.F.H., Head determined it should be a good one. Mrs. Head was great before her massive silver tea set; and she had her daughter on her right to assist her.

At the time appointed Lord Wildrace, who had driven over in his mail phaeton, put in an appearance in his No. 1 pink, closely followed by Spraggon, who determined to have ample time for his breakfast. Then old Jawleyford entered, and rushing up to the lady, declared it was too bad of her not to have come over and seen them. At any rate, they would come and spend a week with them soon at Jawleyford Court, would they not?

Then Soapy Sponge turned up, looking as smart and spruce as ever.

We cannot go through the breakfast—or the speech of Mr. Head, and the other by Mr. Over, or the regrets of the company on their resigning the joint mastership, or the cheers on the announcement that Captain Martain-gail had consented to keep them on.

'Devilish good feed,' growled Jack Spraggon to Sponge, who was drawing on his buckakin gloves. Jack was a little elevated; for he had not spared the cherry-brandy or the milk punch.

'It was that,' replied his friend. 'Feel as if you could ride this morning, don't you?'

'Yes, I can—always do; but no chance of it with such dogs as these.'

'Don't know about that,' returned Sponge. 'They generally find, and kill too.'

Such a field had been rarely seen with the Sternum hounds—horsemen, carriages, mounted ladies, all eager.

'Let the whips be with you, or rather at the outside of the cover, to keep the people back,' whispered Captain Martain-gail to the huntsman. 'I will go to the top of the cover when I give the view halloo. You know what to do.'

'Certain of a fox, I suppose, Martain-gail?' asked Lord Wildrace, as they were smoking their cigars close to the hounds, who were drawn up on a bit of greensward, giving the ten minutes' law for the late comers.

'It has never yet been drawn blank,' returned the Captain. 'Ah! there goes Slowman with the dogs. Time's up.'

Cigar-ends were now thrown away, girths tightened, stirrup-leathers shortened or let down.

The Captain stole into cover,

and then galloped away to the far end.

Presently a ringing tally-ho was heard.

'Found quickly,' growled Jack Spraggon, as he bustled along on Daddy Longlegs to get a good place.

'That's your sort, old cock!' ejaculated Sponge, as he dashed past him on Hercules, throwing a lot of mud on Jack's spectacles from his horse's hoofs.

'Oh, you unrighteous snob!—you rusty-booted Cockney!' exclaimed Spraggon, rubbing at his spectacles with the back of his gloved hand, thereby daubing the mud all over the glasses, and making it worse. 'Just like you, you docked-tail humbug!'

Too-too went Slowman's horn. 'Give 'em time, gentlemen!—give 'em time!' he screamed, as he took the wattle fence from the spinny into the fallow beyond. The hounds took up the drag at once, and raced away.

'Yonder he goes!' exclaimed the Captain, pointing with his whip to some imaginary object, and, digging the latchfords into his horse, was away.

The first fence was a flight of sheep-hurdles, stretching the whole way across a large turnip field. Here Jawleyford on his old cob came to grief, being sent flying right through his ears.

'Serve you right!' muttered Spraggon, as Daddy Longlegs took it in his stride. 'You would not do a bit of paper for me last week. May you lie there for a month!'

'Pick up the bits,' roared Sponge to him as he galloped past, 'and lay in a fresh stock of that famous port of yours.'

But the hounds were carrying too good a head for much chaff. The gentlemen of the Sternum hunt were riding like mad. Already horses began to sob; for the pace was

a rattler, and the country heavy. The celebrated Rushpool brook was before them—that brook that so many have plumbed the depth of. It wants a deal of doing.

Lord Wildrace charged it, so did Spraggon; but both were in. Sponge, on Hercules, flew over. Slowman and the Captain did it a little lower down. Head, Over, and a host of others galloped for a ford half a mile away.

Out of a large field only eight or ten cleared the Rushpool brook. His Lordship and Spraggon were soon out and going; and their horses having a fine turn of speed enabled them to come up with the hounds again; and their checking for a few minutes, in consequence of some sheep having stained the ground, let up the rest of the field on their now nearly beaten horses.

'Fastish thing, my Lord, is it not?' said Over to Lord Wildrace, who was mopping his head with a scarlet silk pocket-handkerchief.

'Yes,' said the nobleman, turning his horse's head to the wind, 'devilish sharp. I'm cold, too. I wish I could see my second horse. I'm pumped out.'

'Have a nip of brandy, Wildrace,' said Captain Martaingail, offering his silver flask. 'Been in the water, I see—and a good many more, too,' casting his eyes on half a score of dripping objects. 'It's a very distressing jump to a horse, is that Rushpool brook. By gad, they have hit off again!'

Slowman knew well the line to cast his hounds, and they soon hit it off, and went racing away again, heads up and sterns down.

At last Bolton Mill was in sight, and here many got their second horses, the head grooms from the other hunt having followed the Captain's, and the joint masters' servants were there already.

Spraggon was quickly on the back of The Dandy; but he was

hardly up before a view halloo was given in a field below them, and a hat held up proclaimed their fox was ahead of them.

'It's all right, Slowman,' said Captain Martaingail, as the hounds feathered on the line and took it up.

'He's right away across the Torns,' shouted a keeper-looking man (this was Towler, who had shaken the fox out) as the field came up, 'an' a-going like blue murder.'

The hunting was now not quite so fast, but they got on better terms with their fox after a little, and settled well to him.

A good stout fox he was too, and deserved a better fate. He led them right into his own country, but before he could reach a friendly earth, seven or eight miles from where he was shook out, the hounds ran into him in the open.

Some eight or ten of the field were in at the finish, and others came up at intervals.

'Here, gentlemen,' exclaimed Slowman triumphantly, to the strangers from a distance, 'this is one of your foxes. I guess we sent him back to you faster a precious deal than ever you sent him to us. Sorry we've killed him, though, your dogs want blood, poor things. You've seen what the Sternum hounds can do now! we're not to be laughed at, are we?'

This impudent speech had not much effect generally, but several gentlemen turned away disgusted.

The run was quoted in every sporting paper; and it was years and years before people forgot the great Rushpool Brook run, the last of the season.

The hounds had achieved a reputation, and Captain Martaingail took care they should not lose it. He carried the horn him-

self after he took to them, Slowman acting as first whip; he drafted most of the hounds, and got together a fresh pack, that were not only good-looking, but could go too. But the dogs never lost the name of the '*Sternum-super-caput*' hounds.

Whilst I am on the subject of hunting, I may as well tell you another funny story which happened to a friend of mine; this took place near London, and although I did not come so badly off as my friend, yet I was nowhere at the finish.

It is of a thorough cockney that I am about to write; of one who made the City his home; did a little in Stocks and on 'Change: he had done so well on it that he had four hunters standing not a hundred miles from the Angel at Islington. Thither he used to go of an evening on the 'bus to his snug little chambers, to which was attached a capital stable with four loose boxes, and in these four boxes stood four decentish nags. I don't know that they were reliable fencers, but they could gallop; they were bang up to the mark—well done, well groomed, and well clothed.

Frank Cropper was proud of his horses, and his stud groom, Dick, was his right hand in all matters. Dick, though he professed to have a profound knowledge of horses, in reality knew nothing about them, and had to thank his strappers for the condition and fettle they were in.

But Dick was great at getting up leathers and top boots, was extremely fond of dress, turned out well, and though he could not ride a yard, led every one to believe he was invincible in the saddle.

He was grand when he used to

dodge about in the lanes after the Paddleton currant-jelly dogs, riding his master's second horse. Cropper thought it the correct thing to have out a second horse with the harriers. No one ever saw Cropper or his man take a fence; they used to gallop through places or fences that had been smashed by some one before them, or creep through gaps made in hedges.

Occasionally he used to honour the Queen's with his presence; there he did it in grand style, sent his horses down by rail, or drove down in his cart, with his brown-holland overalls on, covering his boots and spotless buckskins from the smallest particle of dust or dirt; these he would have taken off with a grand flourish just before the hounds moved away, and mounted his horse with the grandest possible air, telling Dick to ride to points, and to be sure to be handy with his second horse; but, somehow or other, he never got his second horse; Dick always mistook the line of country.

Once or twice Cropper had been known to grace the Epping Forest Hunt on an Easter Monday; but, somehow or other, Frank did not speak much of this: why, I know not.

'Dick,' said his master one morning as he sat at breakfast, 'the day after to-morrow is the last of the season—at least, the last day of any hounds I can get to; so I mean to have a turn with the — staghounds.'

'Do you, sir? I wouldn't if I were you, sir; hate that calf-hunting. The Queen's ain't up to my ideas of huntin'; no staghounds are; but these hounds are duffers, the master's a duffer, the huntsman's a duffer, the whips are duffers, and so are the hounds. No, sir, be Cardinal

Wiseman, and go with the — pack.'

'No, Dick, I have made up my mind to see these hounds; it's a certain find; open the door of the cart and out pops your stag. It's the last day of the season, and I mean to have a good gallop.'

'Very well, sir. You will go down by rail, I suppose?'

'Yes, Dick, yes; by rail. You will go on by the eight-o'clock train. I shall follow by the ten.'

'All right, sir.' And they separated, the man to look to his stable and things, the master to do a little on 'Change.

Frank Cropper went in for a good breakfast on the morning of the last of the season, took plenty of jumping powder in the shape of Kentish cherry brandy, and topped it up with some curaçoa.

'I feel,' says Cropper, as he got into the train, and was talking to some City friends who were bound on the same errand as himself; 'I feel, my boys, that I shall take the lead to-day, and keep it, too. Ha, ha! What do you think of that? A church would not stop me. Temple Bar I should take in my stride, if my horse could jump it. I'm chockful of go this morning; I shall distinguish myself.'

'Or extinguish yourself,' remarked one.

Cigars and an occasional nip at their pocket pistols whiled away the time till the train arrived at its destination; there, Cropper and another took a fly, and drove the three miles they had to go. They were quite determined they would not dirt their boots or spotless leathers by a three-miles' ride; they would appear at the meet as bright as their No. 1 pinks, Day and Martin, and Probert's paste could make them.

'There they are!' exclaimed

Cropper's friend, as he caught sight of the hounds drawn up on a small common. 'By Jupiter, but there's a lot out! it's the last day of the season.'

Cropper descended from the fly in all the glories of his Ulster coat and overalls; his horses were there under the charge of spicy-looking Master Dick.

The overalls were slipped off, and, with the Ulster, consigned to the driver to leave at the station; and our hero mounted his horse and was ready for the fray.

Now, this meet not being far from town, and a large number of the London division being present, the worthy master, having a proper regard for his hounds, thought a few jumps might choke off a good many who would press upon the hounds. So he had the deer uncarted some three-quarters of a mile from where they were, the van containing him was backed not very far from a flight of sheep-hurdles, and a double line of foot people being formed, the door of the cart opened and out leapt the stag. Looking around him for an instant, he started away at a quick trot, and then, as the shouting became louder, commenced to canter, cleared the hurdles, and was away.

'Lot of these London cads down here to-day,' remarked young Lord Reckless to his friend Sir Henry Careful. 'Don't know, 'pon my soul, what they come here for.'

'For about the same reason you do—to see the hounds, and get a fall or two.'

'Ah, that's all very fine,' retorted his Lordship, 'for you to say so. You never ride at anything, therefore you are pretty safe. I-ride at everything.'

'But never by any chance get over,' interrupted the baronet, 'except through your horse's ears.'

What more they said was cut short by the hounds coming up on the line of the stag, and racing away.

I got over the hurdles all right, and so did most of the field; but at the second fence I was down. And I saw Cropper unseated at the same instant, and his horse galloping wildly away at the third fence. Dick was shot through his horse's ears into the next field.

I was rushing about for mine, over my ankles in mud, when I encountered Frank Cropper and his man Dick in the middle of the slough.

'Where the deuce is my second horse?' roared Cropper to his servant. 'I thought I told you to ride him to points.'

'So I was going to, sir; but he stumbled, and unshipped me.'

'Good heavens! what is to be done?' exclaimed Cropper. 'I shall lose the run. Here, you fellows,' to a lot of countrymen about, 'catch the horses—half-a-crown each for them.'

But the nags were not so easily caught, and it was half an hour before they were secured. Both I and Cropper were wet and cold; so, leaving Dick to go on with the horses by train to London, and get the coats at the station, Cropper and I started on foot to walk there. He was too bruised and cold to ride; so was I.

You may suppose that the remarks we heard going along were not complimentary: 'Two gents in scarlet as has been throwed from their 'orses, and a-stumping of it home,' &c.

At last I was getting nearly beat, and so was my friend, when we espied a fly coming along the road. In it was seated Warner, of the Welsh Harp at Hendon. Taking pity on us, he gave us a lift, and drove us to the nearest station, and we reached London in due time.

This was the last of my hunting experiences. I got disgusted with it, and sold my horses. Having read flaming accounts from Cook's tourists, some of whom had been round the world in ninety days, I packed up my guns and some clothes, and started for America.

I did not remain long in New York, as I was anxious to commence shooting. So I was not long in getting to the small town of —, and, putting up at the best hotel the place afforded, which was not a very good one, sent for the landlord.

'Wall, Britisher, I'm glad to see you,' commenced the American Boniface, coolly seating himself on the table, and commencing spitting at a bluebottle fly on the floor. 'So you've come here to see our glorious American constitootion. Wall, I guess you'll be pretty considerable surprised—tarnation surprised, doggoned if you won't. We're an almighty nation, we air. Going a-shooting, air you? Wall, I calkerlate we've got more game hereabouts than would fill all London, and enough ships in our little river the Mississi-pi to tow your little island across the broad Atlantic—we hev, indeed, stranger. There's lots of grouse; but nary a buffeler, [bar, nor alligator about here. But I s'pose you means to take up yer fixins here in this feather-bed bully hotel afore you makes tracks?'

I assured him such was my intention.

'Wall, then, stranger, what will you like?—cocktail, mint julip, brandy amash, or cobbler? I've a few festive cusses in the bar as will tell you all about the shooting. Let's hev a licker-up with them.'

To this I assented, and walked into another room with him, where there were Yankees of all descriptions.

I determined to make myself popular, and stood drinks to any amount.

'Bust my gizzard, but you air a ripper!' exclaimed my tall friend. 'He air, ain't he, bully boys?'

What more they said was drowned in a terrific row which took place at the other end of the apartment.

'Hillo!' shouted my tall friend. 'Come on, stranger, if you want to see our pertikelur customs of this hemisphere. Bet my boots it's Bully Larkins and that old 'oss from Calerforney. Go it, my cockeys!' he screamed out as he mounted on a table, 'go it, old coon!' alluding to one of the combatants; 'go it! Billy's a-gaining on you, and if you don't look out he'll riz yer har with his bowie knife, gouge yer eye, and fetch you out of yer boots—he will, by —!'

Such a fearful row I never heard. All were in a state of frenzied excitement—knives glittered in the hands of many. Whilst all this was going on I made my way out of the apartment, and locked and bolted myself in my own.

In half an hour my landlord came to the door, and knocked for admission.

'It's all over, stranger,' he said as he entered. 'Old Calerforney carved two of Bully Larkins' fingers off with his bowie, and Larkins bit off half t'other's nose. I guess he ain't beautiful. They're festive cusses here, and air always at it. Nary a day passes without a free fight.'

I need hardly say the next day I took my departure for New York, and was off to England by the first boat. I had had quite enough of my American friends and their notions.

I have given up sporting, as I found I could make no hand at it. I shoot occasionally for amusement, and fish occasionally, but never lay down the law as an authority.

THE LAY OF THE NURSERY DOLL.

A VERY round face, and a very flat nose,
 Simply a patch of coarse-coloured rose ;
 A visage whose features are dents of blows ;
 A body inured to all the woes
 That dolls inherit ; eyes that stare
 With a fixed, idiotic, preposterous glare ;
 Limbs that hang, with an awkward air,
 From a body decidedly worse for wear ;
 Length of measurement, be it said,
 Two feet nothing from heel to head.

I have no claim
 To be known to fame
 By any particular Christian name.
 Call me Nelly or Moll,
 Gemima or Poll—
 My history's that of a Nursery Doll.

A Nursery Doll ! Do not suppose
 For a moment I class myself with those
 Of my species whom, in your promenade
 Through the Burlington or Lowther Arcade,
 You have seen displayed
 And duly arrayed
 As the period's boy or the period's maid.
 Of such as these waxen imitations
 Of juvenile over-dressed humanity
 I am scarcely one of the poor relations,
 And am far from all suspicion of vanity.
 A clumsy, misshapen figure of wood,
 Yet I've served my turn as a true doll should.
 Graceless and voiceless, I've played my part,
 Unknown to me the mechanic art
 Which makes of a doll an infant screamer—
 As seen in the windows of Messrs. Cremer—
 Shaping lips of wax towards infantine
 Parental appeal or famished whine—
 Works, in their way, I make no question,
 Wondrous as that of Frankenstein ;
 But as for a well-ordered doll's digestion,
 With this and its organs, 'tis surely clear,
 These vocal arrangements must interfere.

Thus far merely is *en parenthèse*.
 I have limned my image and sketched my face ;
 And so, having given this self-presentation,
 I will now proceed to the due narration,
 In autobiographical strains,
 Of what chiefly remains
 In my mind of the things I have seen and have known :
 For though but a mute spectator alone,
 Yet still in the world in the which I was thrown
 By my destiny's will and the state of the stars,
 I may truthfully say I have been *magna pars*.

Good reader, and gentle, whoever you are,
 Has it e'er been your lot to attend a bazaar?
 I don't mean to say, I would fain have you know,
 A bazaar such as that which you see in Soho,
 Or such as that where—
 Though 'twas called in this case, I believe, Fancy Fair—
 The friends of the drama were used to repair,
 In the picturesque site of the Sydenham parterre,
 Towards the end of July,
 In years now gone by,
 To decline in the passive the one verb 'to fleece,'
 And strawberries buy at a guinea apiece,
 While shocking cigars were unblushingly sold
 For considerably more than their full weight in gold,
 To lunatic youths who, night after night,
 Sighed and wistfully looked before the footlight,
 On the thespian divinity, once in a way
 Now seen and beheld by the full light of day.
 The bazaar that I mean, where I made my *début*
 On the stage of existence, though also 'tis true,
 As was soon clear enough to my doll's power of knowledge,
 Like those held in aid of Maybury College,
 A mart where the purchaser ought to be blind,
 Was something quite different from things of this kind.

To erect a new font,
 Supplying also the want
 Of a painted east window in Middleton Church,
 The Anglican rector—
 No priest was correcter—
 Whom his parish had shamefully left in the lurch—
 The oft-promised funds that he somehow might raise,
 An expedient adopted which was in those days
 A fashion quite novel. In a word, near and far
 He announced for a definite date a bazaar.
 As for the many importunate calls
 On local charity—problem of stalls—
 By whom to be held, and how to avoid
 Offence, and who were, and who were not annoyed—
 Such topics as these it would haply be wise
 To pass over in silence, and just to premise
 That, after a good deal of local hot water,
 The Anglican rector, his wife, and his daughter
 Disposed of all obstacles, joyful to see
 That the parish bazaar was a *fait accompli*.

Of the sundry details of that much looked-for day—
 How victims of all kinds were driven to pay
 Preposterous sums for quite useless wares—
 'Tis the case, as you know, at all fancy fairs—
 By feminine wiles,
 Threats, blandishments, smiles,
 How the neighbourhood came from a distance of miles—
 These are topics on which preserve silence I may.
 Nor need I attempt *catalogue raisonné*
 Or the articles sold, or the price, or the way
 In which buyers were sold to their secret dismay.

The Lay of the Nursery Doll.

Suffice it to say,
 Ere the close of the day
 I was bought by the wife of the county M.P.—
 A rich banker was he—
 Who, just happening to see
 Me, immediately said I should certainly be
 Quite the thing for his little girl, just aged three.
 The dear little pet!
 She scarcely was yet
 Of discretion sufficiently ripened to get
 Her a doll of more dainty and more fragile mould.
 So she paid for me then half-a-sovereign in gold,
 Which was certainly more than my value threefold.
 In a box, by the side of a counterfeit Poll—
 I mean parrot—I laid,
 And so was conveyed
 To my nursery home as the nursery doll.

As Christian the Pilgrim—see Bunyan's work, where,
 Having 'scaped the vexations of Vanity Fair,
 He is caught in the castle of Giant Despair—
 Felt a sudden misgiving over him creep
 When, on looking around, he saw in the deep,
 Detestable dungeons, six feet underground,
 The *membra disjecta* of pilgrims around,
 Thus unpleasantly telling him what to expect—
 Where they'd gone before, that he might go next.
 So with me, as with him,
 Through each wooden limb
 A tremor of panic immediately ran,
 For I saw at a glance, as a doll only can,
 Quick, instinctive, and cursory,
 On entering the nursery,
 The floor of the room all around me was strewn
 With the fragments of dolls distractedly thrown—
 Here a hand, here an arm, here a head, here a bone—
 Who, their duties all done, to these tragical ends
 Were compelled by their thankless and juvenile friends.
 Since now I was there, what was there to do
 But to wait, like a Stoic, my catastrophe too?

Now, believe me, kind reader, I don't want to say
 What may seem at all harsh or out of the way;
 But yet I am driven to observe, in good sooth—
 And conscience impels me to tell all the truth;
 If the words sound severe, there's really no harm in't—
 I defy you to find a more fractious young varmint
 Than Augusta, 'the dear little pet aged three,'
 Whose particular plaything I hence was to be.
 Whatever she touched she'd endeavour to tear,
 To knock, or to bruise, or to smash, or—but there,
 I quickly perceived that it happily stood
 Me in excellent stead—I was all made of wood.
 Spite of all the attempts my small mistress would make,
 I was true to my warranty never to break.
 Augusta, at first, the sweet little pet,
 Would frown and would fret,
 And into some sweet pretty tempers would get,
 As oft as she found
 That, though dashed to the ground,



THE MURDER DOLL.

"Her brother, poor boy, could say, nothing but woe. — 'Thou, Doll, of yonder dame, 's a regular foe.'"

Drawn by M. E. Edwards.

Suffice it to say,
 Ere the close of the day
 I was bought by the wife of the county M.P.—
 A rich banker was he—
 Who, just happening to see
 Me, immediately said I should certainly be
 Quite the thing for his little girl, just aged three.
 The dear little pet!
 She scarcely was yet
 Of discretion sufficiently ripened to get
 Her a doll of more dainty and more fragile mould.
 So she paid for me then half-a-sovereign in gold,
 Which was certainly more than my value threefold.
 In a box, by the side of a counterfeit Poil—
 I mean parrot—I laid,
 And so was conveyed
 To my nursery home as the nursery doll.

As Christian the Pilgrim—see Bunyan's work, where,
 Having escaped the vexations of Vanity Fair,
 He is caught in the castle of Giant Despair—
 Felt a sudden misgiving over him creep
 When, on looking around, he saw in the deep,
 Detestable dungeons, six feet underground,
 The *membra disiecta* of pilgrims around,
 Thus unpleasantly telling him what to expect—
 Where they'd gone before, that he might go next.

So with me, or with him,
 Through each wooden limb
 A terror of panic immediately ran,
 As I, out of a chance, as a doll only can,
 Was, instinctive, and cursory,
 On entering the nursery,
 The floor of the room all around me was strewn
 With the fragments of dolls distractedly thrown—
 Here a hand, here an arm, here a head, here a bone—
 Who, their duties all done, to these tragical ends
 Were compelled by their thankless and juvenile friends.
 Since now I was there, what was there to do
 But to wait, like a Stoic, my catastrophe too?

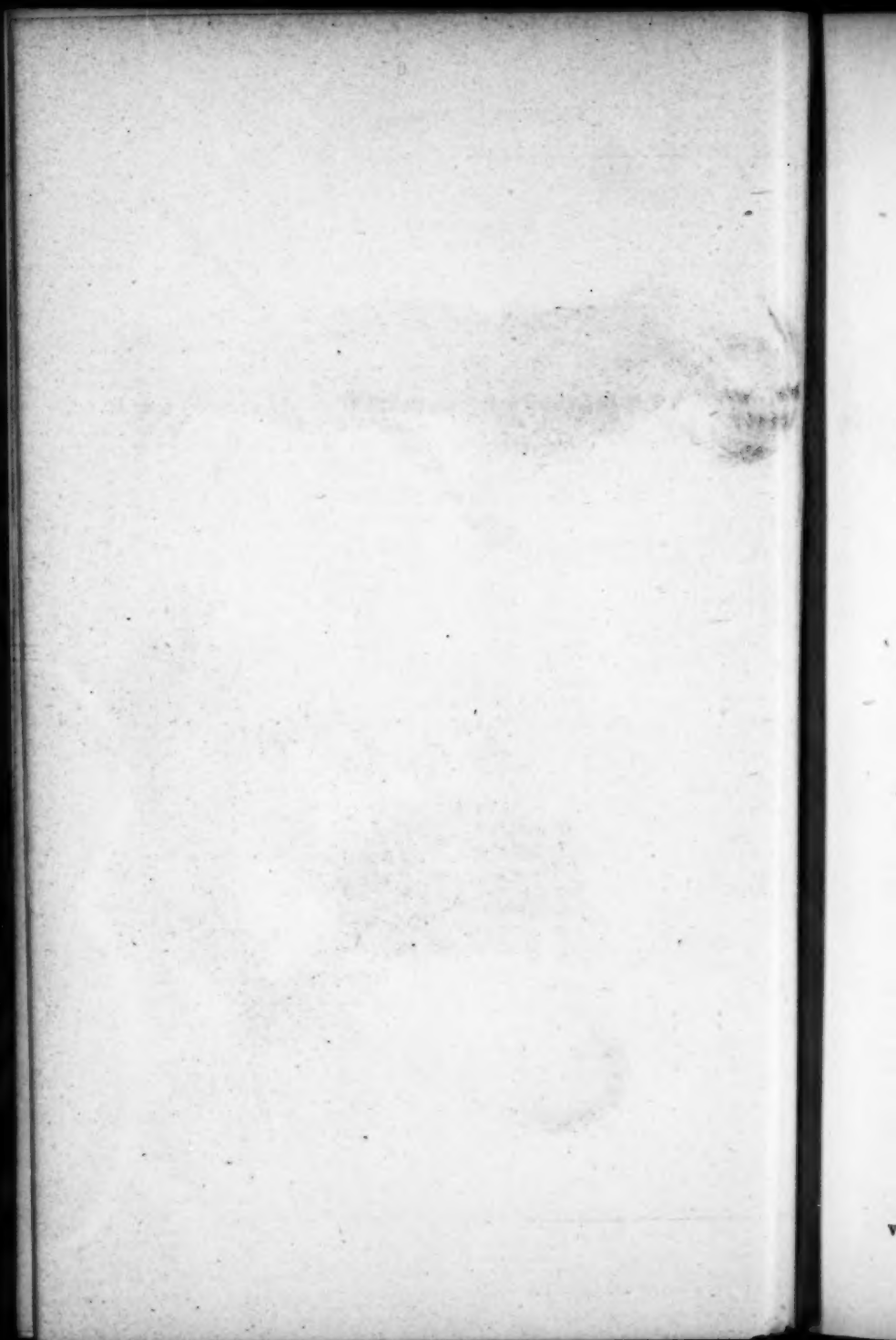
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 Augusta, at first, the sweet little pet,
 Would frown and would fret,
 And into some sweet pretty tempers would get,
 As oft as she found
 That, though dashed to the ground,



Drawn by M. E. Edwards]

THE NURSERY DOLL.

'Her brother, aged five, would say, striding his stick, "That Dolly of yours, Gussie, 's a regular brick."



I most stubbornly still remained safe and sound ;
And, spite of each violent, murderous act,
My limbs and my body were really intact ;

And she screamed, and she cried,
As yet I defied

The strength and the blows she so freely applied,
Which noting approvingly quite, Master Dick,
Her brother, aged five, would say, striding his stick,
'That doll of yours, Gussie, 's a regular brick.

As for your waxen and composite things

Which Nellie [his sister, ag'd eight] always brings

Home, I should like to know who on earth cares

For those dressed-out, stuck-up, stupid affairs !

'Tis worth half a dozen—your nursery dolly.

You may do what you like, and she always seems jolly.

Thus, though I was kicked, and maltreated, and clawed
Found, to quote Virgil, '*sua præmia laudi.*'

I typified pluck, I was always game—

Ugly, but popular just the same !

T. H. S. ESCOTT.



OPEN! SESAME!

BY FLORENCE MARRAT (MRS. ROSS-CHURCH), AUTHOR OF 'LOVE'S CONFLICT,'
'NO INTENTIONS,' ETC., ETC.

CHAPTER XXV.

'I WILL BRAVE HIS ANGER.'

LADY VALENCE, I will be frank with you,' continued Dr. Newall. 'I cannot deny that your husband is ill, and that his illness has been to me a very mysterious and inexplicable thing—until to-day. Mentally, he is very ill; but I do not say he is incurable.'

'Thank God! Oh! thank God!'

'Still, his disease has so much more to do with the mind than the body, that ordinary means will, I am afraid, be of little avail. The plain fact is, that Lord Valence has unhinged his own mind. From a child he has been of a sensitive and emotional temperament; and this disposition, which should have been combated in every possible way, through the means of healthy interests and exercise, he has fatally encouraged by the nature of his studies.'

'Do you mean to say he has brought this state of things on himself?'

'Entirely so. As would any one who gave himself up, body and soul, to the unravelling of mysteries, which, if even the Divine law intended at any period to be made more clear to us, it never meant that in their pursuit we should neglect the higher human duties to which we were born into the world.'

'Dr. Newall! you speak as though you believed it all.'

'Believed what, my dear lady?'

'That it really is possible to hold communication with the unseen world. I know,' continues Everil, rather unsteadily, 'that I began by

telling you that I had seen the—the-spirit; but I thought—I hoped—that is, I fancied—'

'That I could contradict your statement, and tell you that it was all nonsense—the effect of your heated imagination. No! Lady Valence, I can't do that! I do not know, of course, in this case whether it was fancy or not. Your nerves may have been—doubtless were—worked up to the highest pitch, and have raised a phantom of themselves to frighten you.'

'Oh! no! indeed they did not. I know now—I feel sure—that I was not mistaken—that It really was there. Yet—'

'Yet—you are surprised that I believe you. My dear child, this is nothing new to me, or to any one. What you have experienced is as old as the hills.'

'Then you think that all the stories of ghosts that one has heard are true?'

'Certainly not. Not one in a hundred is true; but do you suppose such stories would ever gain ground without *some* foundation? From the earliest ages, Lady Valence, man has at times attempted to raise the veil that hangs between us and the unseen world, and to peer into those mysteries which for some wise purpose have been hidden from ordinary sight, and he has generally suffered for it.'

'Is it wicked?' demands Everil in a low voice.

'It is not for me to say whether it is wicked or not, Lady Valence. The Catholic church, the church

to which I belong, has decided that her children had better not meddle with it; consequently I have no personal experience of its effects on the human mind. But I have, unfortunately, been called on more than once during my professional career to cure a patient whose bodily health has been wrecked by the unnatural strain upon his mind caused by this unnatural study.'

'I have heard of spiritualism, of course, on occasions,' says Everil; 'but I never took any interest in it, and I little thought it could be productive of such awful results as these.'

'No more it is in ordinary cases; but your husband's is not an ordinary case. From a child he has been unusually subject to such influences. I remember when his dear father died, and I went to announce the fact to him, he met me at the door with the intelligence that he was *not* dead, and that he had but just seen him standing in his room. I can see his boyish face now, lighted up, almost as it were ethereally with the conviction. I tried to combat the idea. I hoped then it might have been his imagination; but I soon saw I was mistaken. He has never been like other boys or men since that night.'

'Tell me all about him,' says Everil imploringly.

'He grew too slight and delicate; too fond of solitude and study; too silent and reserved in company. There was no bodily disease apparent, excepting that his pulse was higher and more fitful than was suited to his age, and that he occasionally suffered from slight attacks of fever. Then he went abroad, and for some years I lost sight of him.'

'Did he see these—these things then, Dr. Newall?'

'I cannot tell your Ladyship;

but I fancy not. I think it must have been whilst abroad that he was first imbued with a desire to turn his study of necromancy to account. When he returned I saw a great alteration in him. I ventured once or twice to speak to him on the subject; but he did not encourage me to renew the attempt.'

'Oh! why were you not brave? You should have risked his anger—anything—to save him from himself.'

'My dear lady, remember that my duty extends no further than looking after Lord Valence's body. With his mind, his thoughts, his inner self, I have no right to meddle. It is you alone, who are one with him, who have the privilege to search his soul.'

'And I have found it out too late—too late!'

'We will not say that yet,' replies the old doctor kindly; but she observes that he does not say it hopefully; 'though you have not found it out one day too soon. I knew then that your husband pursued this study more than was good for him, and I saw his health gradually give way; yet I was at a loss to link the two facts together, which, as I observed before, under ordinary circumstances, would have had no connection. But what you have told me to-day makes it all clear to me. If Lord Valence has permitted his curiosity to go to such lengths as you describe, and his mind to believe all the so-called revelations made to him, it is no wonder his health has sunk beneath the torture. Lady Valence, I have told you all I know. Be equally frank with me, or we may lose the last chance of disabusing your husband's mind of this terrible superstition.'

'I will tell you everything, Dr. Newall; but remember my knowledge only dates from last night.'

Valence has always told me that his premature death was certain, and nothing could prevent it; and yesterday he said the very day and hour were fixed. Then it came—oh! what a fool I was to faint; but I never believed that it could be really true. He called it *Isola*, and I remember nothing more. But when I recovered, and questioned him, and implored him to tell me the whole truth, he said that it had told him that he should—faltering—‘that he should’—stopping short.

‘Yes, yes, my dear child, I understand,’ says Dr. Newall soothingly.

‘Next February—on the 3rd—at noon,’ concludes Lady Valence in a despairing whisper.

‘And the poor boy—with a power of emotion that wears out his nature as a sword does its scabbard—is so thoroughly impressed with the idea that what he has heard is true, that the flame of existence flickers down lower every day, and threatens to go out at the appointed time from sheer belief in the impossibility of its lasting longer. And what a life it is to be thus thrown away!’

His words ring in her ears as if they were a death-knell. She rises suddenly from her seat, and throws herself at his feet.

‘Oh, no!—oh, no! Don’t say that, Dr. Newall! for heaven’s sake, don’t say that! You will save him, will you not—now that you know all? You will think of some means by which we may save him from the effects of his own weakness. I know it is nothing, and I cannot say what I want to say; but if my life—my fortune—if I could work—if I could die— Oh, my God! I am talking such folly, when I want to say so much!’

‘Poor child! And do you really love him like this?’

She is sobbing so violently that at first she cannot answer him, but as the feeling of the kind old hand that is laid upon her bowed head soothes her into peace she makes her humble confession to him, still on her knees.

‘I did not once. The conditions of my father’s will that brought us together were repugnant to me. They roused my worst feelings, and I almost hated him. But since we have been man and wife—since I have lived with him, and seen how good and honourable and kind he is, and what a world of tender feeling lies hid beneath his gentle nature, I have learned’—in a lower tone—‘not to love, I think, but to—worship him.’

‘God reward your goodness to him, my child, tenfold into your bosom. And whatever happens—whether the worst we fear comes to pass, or you are spared to spend your lives together—the remembrance of this time, and the strength that has been given you to overcome your pride and acknowledge that you have been in the wrong, will remain to comfort you to the very end.’

She has regained her calmness by this time, and she rises and takes a seat opposite to him with only a trace of sadness on her features.

‘But what am I to do, Dr. Newall?’ she says, after a pause. ‘What can we do, in order, if possible, to avert this awful calamity?’

‘I am not prepared all at once to tell you that, Lady Valence. With this new knowledge in my mind, I must watch the Earl narrowly for the next few days, and see what effect the warning has had upon his general health. It has appeared to me better of late. I hoped it was mending.’

‘So did I. And if you could

only have seen him this morning! He looked so young and cheerful as he bid me good-bye. No one but myself could believe the horrors he went through last night. But Mrs. West, who has been his companion throughout this fatal study, tells every one that he is dying. And he believes it. And——'

'Lady Valence, excuse me for interrupting you, but I have made up my mind on the matter. I will speak to the Earl myself. No! do not be afraid. I shall not mention this visit to him, nor even hint that I have seen you; but I will lead him on to speak about his general health until I draw the real truth from him.'

'But will he not be angry with you? Agatha has told me he will not permit his most intimate friends to approach the subject.'

'I will brave his anger, for your sake and his own. At the worst, he can but disbelieve me, and my arguments, if convincing, may turn his thoughts into another direction. Meanwhile, Lady Valence, the one thing needful is to divert his mind. Don't mention spiritualism to him in any way—don't even allude to it; but engage him in lively conversation and pursuits, and draw him out of himself.'

'Ah! that is easier said than done. You don't know the difficulties of what you propose. In this gloomy old castle, too, of which every nook and corner is associated in his memory with some spectral illusion. He is not free from them even in his own chamber. His world is peopled with unnatural creations. He lives in an atmosphere of mystery.'

'Take him away from Castle Valence, then.'

'Where? Abroad? Do you think he would come?'

'Why not make the attempt? Ask him to go—for your sake.'

She clasps her hands together. A red glow of hope suffuses her cheek.

'Perhaps he would! And then, when we are far away from all that can recall the past to him—he and I, together and alone—I shall have courage, perhaps, to speak openly and do combat with his fears to convince him that it is imagination. But no! no!' she continues, shrinking back, as the thought of what she saw in the library the night before comes back upon her mind. 'How can I say that when I know it to be real—so real?'

'The apparition may be real, Lady Valence. It is no reason that its prophecy should be real also. The line of argument I should wish you to adopt with your husband is, not that his sense of sight has deceived him, but his sense of reasoning.'

'I see—I understand,' she says, rising. 'Dr. Newall, how can I thank you sufficiently! You have given me hope. It is but a glimmer, but it is hope.'

'Your Ladyship has given me more than hope,' he answers cheerily. 'You have given me the certain assurance that my dear friend's son has at last some one to care for and look after him. Lady Valence, I never liked Mrs. West. I may be unjust in my conclusions, but I do not think Mrs. West is to be trusted.'

'No more do I, Dr. Newall; but Agatha is one of Valence's infatuations. He believes she is devoted to his interests, and she takes good care to keep him up to the belief.'

'Get rid of Mrs. West as soon as you conveniently can,' remarks the Doctor quietly—so quietly that he makes Everil laugh.

'She tells Valence that some-

body intends to relieve me of the trouble, Dr. Newall.'

'The sooner the better. Come, Lady Valence, that is something like a face to take back to the Castle. I never saw you look so happy, nor—if you will allow me to say it—so beautiful before.'

'I am going back to *him*!' she answers brightly, as she leaves him to ponder over the intelligence he has received.

CHAPTER XXVI.

'MY HONOUR—AS A GENTLEMAN.'

NATURALLY it occupies his mind for the remainder of the day, though he is not so much puzzled by it as most men might have been.

Dr. Newall has been bred up in the Catholic faith, and miracles are no subjects, of incredulity with him. He knows that they have occurred from the beginning of time. He believes they will continue to the end, and he is not prepared to argue when they should or should not be revealed to men. But none the less is he able to see how fatal a power that of communication with the unseen world would prove in the hands of most mortals, nor how the man must suffer who resigns his will and reason to those of spirits in nowise better fitted to guide him than his own, except for the fact that they have been unclothed from the flesh with which he is still encumbered. He is so troubled on the matter that he cannot rest, and, having left his early dinner untasted on the table, strolls towards the Castle in hopes of finding Lord Valence at home. On his way he encounters Mrs. West.

'Well, Mrs. West, how is the little man going on? Famously, eh! I thought we shouldn't make a long job of it. But you must be

careful not to let him get out of doors too soon. It is treacherous weather for taking cold.'

'Oh! no, Dr. Newall. I should be careful of any one in such a case; but with Arthur, whose life is so especially precious!'

'Oh!—ah!—yes! an only child, of course. They're always spoiled. But you'll marry again some day, Mrs. West, and make up your baker's dozen.'

She alluded to her child's chance of inheriting the earldom, and Dr. Newall knows as well as possible that she intended him to understand it so; but he will not flatter her ambitious hopes.

'Even if I do,' replies the widow, not entirely displeased with the supposition, 'I don't see how it will make any difference to my dear Arthur's prospects. How ill poor Valence is looking, Doctor!'

A notion comes into the Doctor's head. He will question this shifty little woman and try to bring her to book before he sees the Earl, so that he may have some foundation on which to rest his sudden determination to trace the cause of his indisposition to the root.

'Very ill, Mrs. West; and I have had reason to think lately there is some ulterior cause for his illness, which has not yet been disclosed to me, and without discovering which my remedies will continue to be of no avail. Now, I think you can help me in the matter. You are the Earl's constant companion, I may say his most intimate friend. You have assisted him also, if I guess rightly, in the pursuit of this study of necromancy, to which he is so much addicted. Now, tell me the truth. How far does he permit it to affect his daily life?'

How quickly the wind changes. It may be blowing in your face one moment, and apparently, without rhyme or reason, you find it

against your back the next. Mrs. West's tactics are like the wind. She commenced the conversation with the idea of hearing Dr. Newall reiterate his former statements that Lord Valence's symptoms are such a puzzle to him that his disease must take its chance; in which case she would have confirmed his suspicions, and lamented with him the sad prospect of their mutual bereavement; but directly she hears his appeal to her to disclose all she may know of Valence's private studies, and the effect they have produced on his mind and body, she scents danger and disappointment in the distance, and is ignorance itself upon the subject.

'Necromancy, Doctor? What an awful term! Do you mean spiritualism? Just sitting at a table, and all that kind of nonsense?'

'No, Mrs. West. I don't mean any kind of nonsense. I mean this study which is affecting Lord Valence's brain, and may be productive of the most fatal consequences to his health. Do you not pursue it with him?'

'Do I not, what is called "sit" with him, you mean. Oh, sometimes.'

'How often do you call "sometimes?" Every day?'

'Oh! now, Dr. Newall, how do you suppose I could attend to my darling child, and to dear Valence himself, for that matter, if I were always playing at turning tables? No, of course not.'

'Every other day, perhaps?'

'I really couldn't say. I go when dear Valence asks me, just to please him, you know, for an hour or so, after the rest have gone to bed.'

'And what occurs at these sittings? Please be frank with me, madam. Your brother-in-law's life may depend upon your answers.'

How well she knows it!

'I wish you wouldn't talk in that horribly solemn way, Doctor; you make one feel so nervous. Besides what have our little *séances* to do with dear Valence's health?'

'Everything, as I imagine.'

'Oh, Doctor! What, just watching a table turn round, or hearing it rap? How could that hurt anybody? I am sure I would never sit again if I thought so. I should be afraid of it for myself.'

'Do you mean to tell me that, after so many years of patient investigation on the part of Lord Valence and yourself, Mrs. West, nothing more occurs at these *séances* than you have already mentioned? No sounds or touches—no appearances?'

'No *ghosts*, do you mean? Goodness, Doctor! no! Do you suppose I should be alive to speak to you about them if there had been *appearances*? Good heavens! how you make me creep! I feel as if I should never be warm again.'

'Then what are these faints or fits—these lengthened periods of unconsciousness, which I understand Lord Valence suffers from?'

He looks at her sternly, and Agatha does not quite know what to answer. If she denies all knowledge of the Earl's trances she may be convicted of falsehood, for Valence may have mentioned them himself to the Doctor, or the servants may have been bold enough to carry the report to him. Agatha seldom finds herself in a quandary, but she is in one now. Yet, Cat-like, she shuffles out of it, though tamely.

'Oh! his faints, you mean. People foam at the mouth, don't they, when they have fits? Besides, I know these are faints. I have often fainted myself. There is not much danger in fainting, is there?'

'The question now is, not what

is dangerous, or what is not, but how far has this disease gone. Why have I not been informed of Lord Valence's fainting? You have seen me constantly, Mrs. West, and have discussed this subject almost as often as we have met. Why have you never directed my attention to this phase of his illness?

'I really did not think it was of sufficient consequence.'

'Does it occur often?'

'Oh, dear, no!—only occasionally. When he is over-fatigued, I suppose. You will allow that I have never denied that he is very weak, Dr. Newall.'

'How long do the attacks last?'

'Not very long. They are ordinary fainting fits.'

'Yet a rumour has reached me of his having had one that lasted above an hour, Mrs. West.'

She colours at this.

'Ah! that was an exceptional occasion; and I should have sent for you then, of course, Dr. Newall, if it had been in the day, but it took place at night.'

'You might have told me of it afterwards.'

'Well, perhaps I should; but poor dear Valence is very sensitive, you know, and most averse to the subject of his health being commented on. He would not be pleased to hear that we ever discussed it together.'

'He must hear it without being pleased, then,' answers the Doctor roughly, 'for I am determined to sift this matter to the bottom. Is the Earl within doors?'

'I think so; I am not sure. But, oh! Dr. Newall,' continues Agatha, with real alarm, 'I *hope* you will confine your inquiries entirely to his bodily health, and not mention a word about spiritualism. He will never forgive you if you do.'

'I shall act for the best, madam,

and say and do exactly as occasion requires, without any reference to Lord Valence's feelings. The business has gone too far for that now.'

'But it is matter of so entirely private a nature, Doctor. I don't think any friend, however intimate, has a right to pry into the secrets of another's breast.'

'I hope I have always proved myself a friend of Lord Valence, Mrs. West; but in this instance I go to him purely in the character of his medical adviser.'

'But you will startle him; you will shock his sense of delicacy if you dash at once into a subject which he has considered a profound secret. Let me go to Valence first, Doctor. Let me prepare him.'

'By no means!' says the Doctor, as firmly but gently he puts her on one side. 'I do not need your assistance, Mrs. West. I wish to see Lord Valence by himself; and if he is not at home when I call, I shall wait until he returns;' and so saying, he leaves the little widow very ill at ease, and puzzled to conjecture what can possibly be the issue of the coming venture. Will Valence be so weak as to disclose all; and if he so discloses it, will Dr. Newall have the power to laugh him out of his belief, or convince him of its fallacy? Who can have aroused the Doctor's suspicions?

As this question presents itself to her mind, a sudden look of intelligence—of disappointment—of fear, passes over her features. She would run after the Doctor, and at all risks forestall the communication he is likely to receive, so as to infuse a little of her own colouring to the facts which must inevitably startle him into further inquiry; but he is already past the possibility of being overtaken. Even as she looks round for him,



OPEN SESAME!

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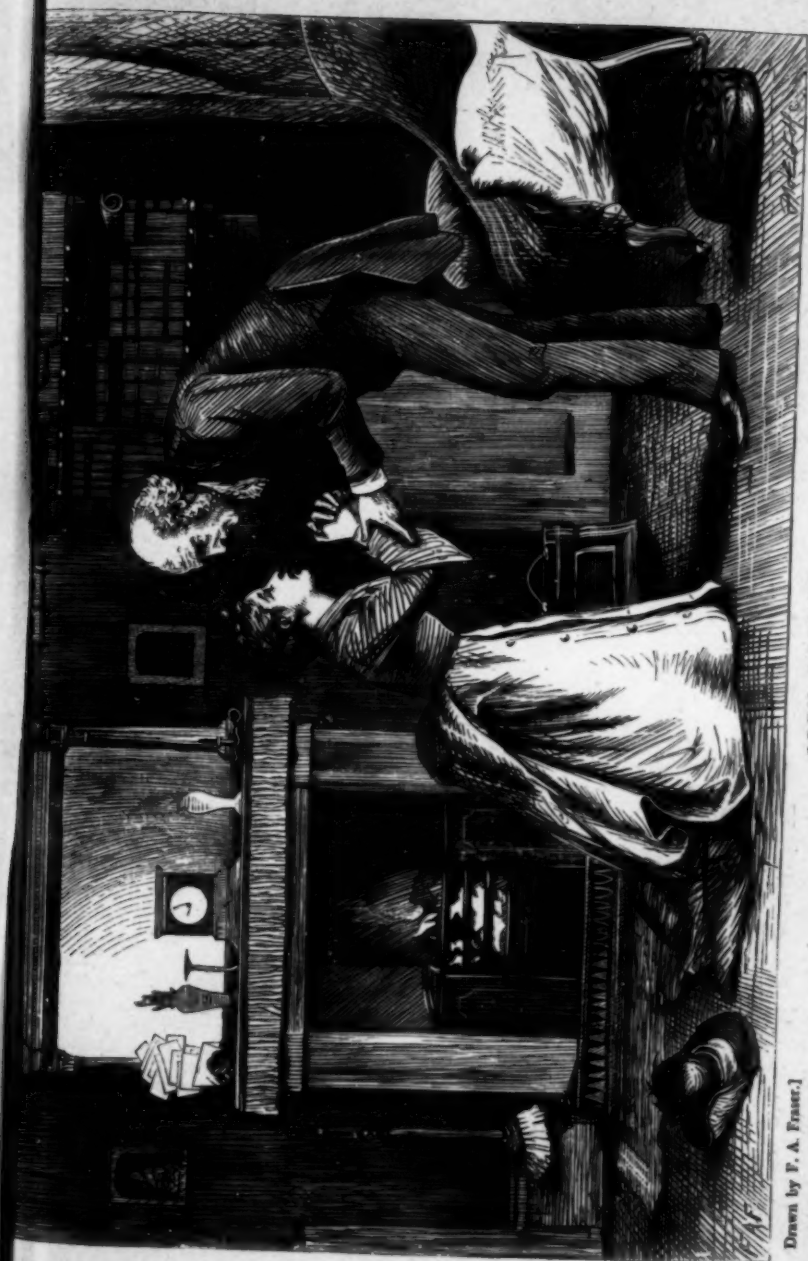
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OPEN SESAME!

'You will save him, will you not?'

Drawn by F. A. Fraser.]



she sees him disappearing within the Castle walls; and she has no better companions than her conjectures and her fears for the remainder of her walk.

When Lord Valence hears that Dr. Newall is waiting to see him, he comes bounding into the library as if he were a boy.

'How are you, Newall? Splendid day, isn't it? I've just come back from Ballybroogan. Have you seen Lady Valence? I left her here not a minute ago, tossing my poor old books hither and thither, and transforming all my bachelor neatness into exquisite confusion.'

He seats himself on the edge of a table as he speaks, and with folded arms regards the Doctor smilingly. His eyes are bright; his cheek is flushed; his hair thrown carelessly off his forehead. His old friend thinks he has never seen him look happier or better before. Is it possible that this is the man who believes in a gloomy foreboding of death to such a degree as to permit it to sap the very springs of his existence? It appears incredible. And yet, beautiful as are his speaking features at this moment, there is a hectic spot upon his cheek and a glitter in his eye, too deep, too bright for health. He looks like a votary of that terrible god Consumption, who bedecks her victims to the last, hides their sunk cheeks with roses, and lights up their dying eyes with the lamp of fever.

'No, my Lord, I have not seen her Ladyship since I entered the Castle. I trust that she is well.'

'Oh, I think so; but she complains of a little headache this morning. We were up rather late last night.'

As he says the words, some happy recollection strikes him,

and a glorious smile breaks out over his countenance.

'Is she not beautiful, Newall? I don't think I ever saw such another figure, so graceful, so elastic, and yet so firm. It is difficult to conceive her ever getting ill.'

'She appears, indeed, the very embodiment of health. I wish she could impart a little of her strength to you, my Lord. You do not make the progress I should like to see.'

His countenance falls directly.

Oh, I'm well enough, Newall; as well as I shall ever be. Don't trouble yourself on my account.'

'But I *must* trouble myself on your account, my Lord. It is my duty as well as my interest. And when I consider how much depends upon your well-doing; what wealth you have to account for; what a wife to cherish; what a long race of heirs, I hope, of which to be the founder, I feel that no more sacred charge could have been placed into my hands by your dear lamented father than the charge of your health.'

Lord Valence has shifted his place during this colloquy: he has moved from beneath the piercing gaze of the doctor's eyes; and is now walking restlessly about the apartment, taking up a book from one table and laying it down on another, but never bringing himself again under the scrutiny of his old friend.

'You have nothing to reproach yourself with, Newall,' he says at length. 'You have done your part of the business conscientiously, and if I don't repay your care, it's the fault of my constitution alone. The cleverest doctor in the world can't keep life in a sinking body when the leak is sprung by Heaven.'

'I don't believe Heaven has anything to do with the springing

of your leak, my Lord,' replies the Doctor bluntly.

Valence colours.

'I don't understand you. You've been attending me now for some years. I've followed your advice whenever it was practicable, and I've swallowed all your stuff. Why, didn't I even embark on the venturesome sea of matrimony on the strength of your advice? I don't see what a man could do more. And yet I don't get well. Feel my pulse!'

'It is at fever heat, my Lord.'

'And half an hour ago it was scarcely perceptible. My spirits—my energy—my appetite, play for nothing. I become feverish for the same cause. I am strong one hour, and utterly prostrated the next. You may be puzzled at my symptoms, but I know them well, Newall, and they mean—Death.'

'I know, too, that they mean—Death.'

'You agree with me at last, then?'

'Not entirely. The death you would signify is a succumbing to God's will. The death I mean is—suicide.'

'Newall!'

'It is the solemn truth, my Lord. There is no physical reason you should not live. If you die before your time, it will be by your own hand.'

'This is strong language, Newall. I have not been used to hear you speak like this.'

'Because I have never seen so clearly as I do now the stern necessity there is for my so speaking. I have watched your malady increasing year by year. I knew there was no ordinary cause for it, and I hoped that marriage, with all the interests and joys it brings in its train, might have the effect of weaning you from the contemplation of yourself. But what has been the result? You

have youth and every prospect of happiness; wealth at your command; a wife who loves you dearly——'

'God bless her!' cries his listener.

'Whom any man might be proud to call his own; for whom most men would sacrifice their dearest interests; resign their most cherished hopes; and yet for whom—excuse me, my Lord, if I offend you—you appear to me to be unable to give up even your unhallowed pursuits.'

Valence's countenance clouds over again.

'I don't understand you,' he repeats.

'Answer me frankly, my Lord. Remember I have known you from a boy. Does the conviction that you are not long for this world spring entirely from your observation of your own health, or is there not rather some ulterior cause for your belief?'

'He has touched his patron now upon his tenderest point, and the galled withers wince.'

'I cannot perceive the object of your curiosity, Newall. Your business lies with my body; please to confine yourself to it.'

'My business lies with your general health, and it is your mind which is affecting your body.'

'I don't believe in the mind affecting the body. Besides, my theory—my conviction—Newall,' he continues, suddenly interrupting himself, 'you know of old how averse I am to metaphysical discussions on the reason of my ill-health. If you consider that my blood is out of order, or my heart is affected, or any other of my natural functions require regulation, regulate them, for Heaven's sake, but leave the subject of my brain alone. I will attend to any reasonable direc-

tions you may give me. I will swallow any filth you may think fit to order me, but I won't be talked to as if I were a child or an idiot, ready to frighten myself into fits at the first shadow that crosses my pathway. You might as well tell me I am mad at once.'

'You are mad,' cries the old doctor, reckless of the effect his bold words may create. 'You are worse than mad, my Lord, to throw away all your chances of happiness for the sake of maintaining your reserve. I know you have a secret canker gnawing at your heart, that some thing, or act, or person, has laid on you a burden too heavy for you to bear. You will not confide in me—you will not take advantage of the benefit my advice—my reasoning—might afford you; and if you die (which God forbid!), weighed down by a load no mortal could sustain unaided and unharmed, you will as surely die by your own hand as though you placed the muzzle of a pistol in your mouth and blew out your brains.'

The old man's unexpected energy has startled Valence, who leans his weight against a table and turns pale visibly.

'Confide in me, my Lord,' continues Dr. Newall, 'tell me everything, and it will go hard but we will find a remedy between us by which to exorcise the demon that holds you in his thrall.'

'It is impossible—it would be useless,' says the Earl, with closed teeth. 'You do not know of what you speak!'

'But if I do not know, I may be able to guess. Your secret studies are no secret to me, my Lord; neither are they incomprehensible. I can imagine the hold they have gained over your natural feelings, the fetters they have cast about

your mind. But let me hear the worst; disclose to me the utmost lengths to which they have misled you—the depths of mystery into which you have dived, and I may yet aid you to see daylight from the bottom of the dark well in which you seek for Truth.'

The Earl becomes excited, his gestures are violent, his voice raised and discordant.

'I tell you again it is impossible. I can never tell what you desire, to you or any man. I have passed my word of honour. Now that you know that, you know that you renew the subject at your own risk.'

'Heaven pity you!' says Dr. Newall sadly. 'And you can resign that lovely wife of yours, give up all her love, her sweet companionship, her true sympathy, and go down into the grave before your time, for the sake of a chimerical honour which binds you to your superstition like a slave!'

'It would be useless to break my word,' says Valence faintly. 'Nothing can save me now.'

'It is not true!' exclaims the old doctor loudly. 'God can save you, my Lord—but He helps those who help themselves. Be a man! Shake off this slough of superstition and blind bigotry which has unsexed you. Resolve to give up your unnatural studies: to have nothing more to do with them or anything that concerns them, but to take your place bravely, like other men, upon the battlefield of life; and I'll engage, with the blessing of Heaven, to restore you to your former health and to your wife.'

'Can it be possible?' cries Valence, starting forward, his face all aglow with the bright picture conjured up before him. 'To live, for her, with her! Oh, no—it will never be. It is too good to be true!'

At this moment the library door opens, and Everil appears upon the threshold.

'May I come in, dearest? Ah, Dr. Newall, I did not know that you were here.'

Valence does not answer, but he turns his eyes wearily towards her. She comes forward and lays her hand upon his shoulder.

'Are you not well, love? Oh, Valence! what is the matter? Speak to me! Do not frighten me like this!'

'Everil!—my wife!' is all that he can say.

'I am glad you have come, Lady Valence,' chimes in the Doctor in a cheerful voice. 'I have just been speaking to your husband about the necessity of looking a little more after his health; and now I want you to persuade him to take a holiday somewhere—to go away together for a short time, that he may have change of scene and rest.'

'You will come, my darling, for my sake?' she urges tenderly, with her arms about him.

'What would I *not* do for your sake, Everil?' he answers.

'Except—break down your barriers of reserve,' says the Doctor significantly.

'Except—prove false to my honour as a gentleman,' the Earl replies.

CHAPTER XXVII.

THE EARL'S DIARY.

'MENTONE! I have been alone with her in this sweet place for the last ten days. Winter is on the world, but there is no trace of it here. The roses and myrtles are blooming as contentedly as if they were in the midst of summer, and the sun is so powerful and the air so soft and balmy, that we are out of doors all day long, with huge

umbrellas over our heads. It is only after sunset that the atmosphere becomes chilly, and then we retreat to the shelter of our villa, and are together and—alone.

'Alone! with my dear girl's head resting on my shoulder, her sweet eyes fixed on mine, our hands clasped with a firm, firm hold, that mutely says, "till death."

'In all my life, throughout my vague dreamings, in my warmest imagination, I never conceived such happiness as this. This is our real honeymoon, our true marriage: when our hearts are no longer afraid to look on one another and to tell the truth—that we have loved and longed to show our love from the beginning. Oh, my God! I have lived long enough, since I have lived to hear my wife say that she loves me. I hardly know how she brought me here. I found myself in Mentone almost before I knew that I was coming. I think it must have been some deep-laid plot between old Newall and herself to get me away from Castle Valence. Everil asked me to come for *her* sake, and how could I refuse?

'Any way, I am here, and glad to be here. Would it could last for ever! There was a grand commotion at the Castle the day we left. Staunton had just taken his departure, and my friend Bulwer seized the opportunity of the party breaking up to declare his affection for Miss Mildmay. Of course the women were tremendously upset by the announcement. Alice cried, first in my wife's arms, and then in Agatha's arms; and both Everil and Agatha considered it due to the occasion to mingle their tears with hers, until poor Bulwer looked very much as if he wished he had never broached the subject, and would like to run away somewhere and hide himself. It happened on

the very eve of our intended journey, and delayed it for a day, as Everil would not stir till her friends were made happy by a telegram from old Mildmay containing his consent to their engagement. Miss Alice then, all blushes, smiles, and tears, took her departure for England; and Bulwer went home triumphantly. He's a dear, good fellow, and I hope he may be as happy as he deserves; but I can't understand his caring for a pink-and-white piece of prettiness like Alice Mildmay. She's all very well, I dare say—healthy, and amiable, and ladylike; but when you come to compare her with—well, say with my Everil—what a difference there is! The one, all fire and energy and action—the other, just a pretty simpleton, nothing more. In fact, I can't understand any man falling in love with any woman whilst Everil is within the range of sight. I tell my lady this, and she laughs and says it is very lucky for me that other people are not of the same opinion, or she might be tempted to change her mind. *Change!* Heavens! how the word went through my heart like the point of a poniard! *Change!* Is it possible her heart can be ever less mine than it is at the present moment? I did not let her see it, but I *felt* the pallor that crept over my features at the idea. For the first time in my life, I experienced the sting of jealousy. It is not a pleasant feeling. It made me cognisant at once of the fact that were it not for outward circumstances, I might be a murderer! I believe that were Everil to change towards me now—to take back the sweet love with which she has enriched my life, and bestow it on another—that I should kill him—that I should fly at his throat as a dog flies at a bull, and hang there till

he dropped. And then I should get the heel of my foot upon his false upturned face and grind it into a shapeless mass! Bah! Of what am I dreaming? Am I going to let this new, beautiful love, instead of raising my nature, debase and lower it? Oh, Everil! how unworthy I am of you! Were we to live long together, how disappointed you would become in me! But for the short time you are to be mine, I will keep all lesser feelings that dishonour our love out of sight, that you may have no bitter memories of me when I am gone.

* * * * *

'Well, Bulwer and Alice are happy, and have promised to return to the Castle at Christmas, when we hope to meet all our friends again. Staunton, too, is to be there. I cannot understand my wife's feelings with regard to Staunton. He appears to me to be a very nice young fellow—quick, good-natured, and gentlemanlike—and he is a special favourite of Agatha's; but Everil seems to have conceived a positive aversion to him. I never mention his name but she changes the subject, and has several times said she wishes she might never see him again. However, I asked him to rejoin us at Christmas, more for Agatha's sake than my own; for Agatha not only thinks very highly of young Staunton herself, but has evident reason for believing that Staunton thinks very highly of her. I have caught them several times lately whispering, with their heads close together, and looking very confused, and uncommonly like lovers, when I disturbed them. Well, I cannot disguise to myself the truth that it would be a very good thing if Agatha *did* marry again. What is she to do, poor girl, when I am gone! Everil and she do not get on as well together

as I should like to see. Bulwer cannot bear the sight of her, and says so openly. Even Alice Mildmay seems afraid of making her a friend; and the servants are really almost rebellious. No one seems to care for poor Agatha as I do; and even I must confess I should be happier, and feel freer, alone with my wife. Agatha and I had a sad scene a few evenings before we left Ireland. I think it must have been the day after we had decided to go, and I was putting away a few things in my library, when her tap sounded on the door. She looked haggard and careworn, as if she had been crying, and I accused her of the fact. She came up to my side and laid her hand upon my arm: "How can I be otherwise than miserable, Valence," she said, "when I see all confidence between us is at an end?"

"I guessed she alluded to my projected journey, and told her how my wife had extracted a promise from me to go in the very presence of the doctor who had advised it.

"And should not I have advised the same?" she answered. "Have I not had at least as much care for your health as Everil has?"

"Her reproach came home to me; for, for the last five years Agatha has really been indefatigable in looking after my comfort, and devoting herself to me in every way. I always have been, and always shall be, grateful to her for her care and solicitude; but of course my affection for her fades into nothing by the side of what I feel for my wife. I tried to thank her; but I suppose my words sounded cold; for she refused to accept them as they were intended.

"It is of no consequence," she kept on repeating. "Of course I am nobody now. I knew that it must come to this; but oh! Va-

lence, however happy you may be in the future, don't forget what I have been to you, and dear Arthur! Don't forget the scenes we have passed through together—the wonders we have witnessed—the——"

"Her allusion recalled me to myself. I left the work on which I was employed, and staggered to a chair.

"Isola!" I murmured, "my father! my brother!—how can you talk to me of a happy future, Agatha, when you know my days are numbered—that I shall never live to see another year complete its course?"

"And if so, dear Valence, why should you not enjoy life to the close? If you have but a few months more to remain with us, why should they not be happy months? Isola would have them so. They would all have them so. Go to Mentone, and be as happy as you may. It is not of your probable happiness I complain; it is that you should think I should not be the first to rejoice at it."

"But her words had quenched all my joy. I threw the articles I was packing away down on the floor in a heap.

"What is the use," I exclaimed angrily, "of my attempting to cheat myself into the idea that I can enjoy life or love like other men? The dark shadow of death hangs over everything I do and say. I am a doomed creature, and even my wedding feast is spread on a funeral pall."

"Dear Valence, this is wrong—this is ungrateful," said Agatha softly. "What would Isola say?"

"My sister-in-law has a very sweet voice and winning way; but I wish she wouldn't introduce the mention of Isola upon every occasion. I know my fate well enough—no one can blind my eyes to it; but surely I may forget it for a while—for a little while—and de-

ceive myself, if I can, into the belief that it has never been revealed to me.

"I am sick of the name of Isola," I exclaimed impetuously. "All my unhappiness, all my want of courage, has sprung from the moment I first heard it mentioned."

"Oh, Valence!" said Agatha reproachfully, "and after all her kindness—when she loves you so!"

"Was it kindness to disclose to me a secret that has embittered my existence ever since? Was it love to hang a drawn sword by a hair over my head, that might descend at any moment? That is what Isola has done for me. If she foresaw the doom in store for me, why couldn't she let me go on, like other men, in happy ignorance until the moment came? Anticipation, which is the worst part of pain, has killed my heart before my body dies."

"Never mind, Valence—let us say no more about it."

'But here a sense of my ingratitude struck me. Why was I such a coward—such a traitor to the cause to which my life has been dedicated? I turned and seized my sister-in-law's hand.

"Forgive me, Agatha; but if you know how much I suffer! To love her so much—to know she loves me—"

"To know Everil loves you!" repeated Agatha in an incredulous tone.

"Yes. You may look surprised; but I do know it, thank God; and on the best authority. She has told it me with her own dear lips."

"Oh, she has told it you herself, has she?" replied my sister-in-law; but I did not quite like the sound of her voice.

"Her own self. Did you know it, Agatha?—did you guess it?"

"I certainly never guessed it.

It is the last thing in the world I should have guessed."

"But it is true as heaven; and it is at her wish that I am going to Mentone, that we may have a few weeks of quiet happiness together. Nor can you wonder, Agatha, that, if possible, I should like to forget, if only for this sweet, brief interval of pain, the fate that lies before me."

"Oh no! It is very natural, my dear Valence, and I only hope you may forget it. I hope you may be very happy, and find no cause to regret old friends in the possession of new ones. I hope you may never be disappointed in anything you desire, nor place too much confidence in a rotten reed. And I could hardly wish a better wish for you than that, could I, my poor boy?"

'Her words were kind, so was her manner, as she kissed and left me. There was nothing in either that I could find fault with; and yet they left an unpleasant impression on my mind, as though she thought me an infatuated fool for loving Everil when I shall so soon be called on to exchange this world for another.

* * * * *

'Everil is so different from Agatha; indeed, she is different from any woman I ever met in the world before. I did not understand her until I brought her to this sweet, quiet place, where we are together all day long, and know no one to break in upon our solitude and distract our thoughts from one another's company. At her own home in Herefordshire she was always so grand, and stately, and dominant, so much "*La belle Châtelaine*," that I almost forgot she was a girl in years; and since we have been married, her distress at our mutual reserve and unconscious fear

lest we should never love each other have made her appear still more womanly in her proud silence and melancholy. But now that the flood-gates of our hearts have been opened and all barriers are broken down between us, my darling has come out in a new character. She runs about the house, she talks, she laughs, she dances, she sings, and it is only now and then, when some allusion to the future brings my destiny before her mind, that I see a dark cloud pass across her lovely face and quench the light of her dear eyes, as though they were blinded with unshed tears. But a smile, a caress from me, has power to make the sun break out again; and I can sometimes hardly believe that the bright, happy girl who sits on my knee, or at my feet, coaxing me into laughter by her quaint mimicry, or almost moving me to tears by the exhibition of her love, is the same wilful, defiant, and apparently heartless cousin who met me on our betrothal morn with the assertion that she would marry me all the same if I were a chimpanzee. We have often talked over that time. Everil has spoken of it and lamented over it till her sweet face has been bathed in tears, and I have been forced to make her smile again by an account of my first impression of herself, and what a dreadful hoyden I thought I was taking as a wife. We have talked over everything that has either distressed or gladdened us. We have had sweet confidences that have laid our hearts mutually bare and made us feel that never again can we misunderstand each other. But there is one topic that we cannot approach with ease, and that is, Spiritualism.

'Everil has attempted it. Greatly as she shudders at the remembrance of the night she spent

with me in the library—that night which proved to be the saddest and most joyful of my life, inasmuch as it gave me what I longed for, only to name the very hour when I must resign it again—she has forced herself to question me searchingly and to try and argue me out of the reason of my belief. I have told her as little as I could in reply. Why should I leave the dear child my sad experience as a legacy? Rather would I have her, when I am gone, forget that such a fatal study exists, or that it had any part in embittering the short time we spent together. She is stronger minded and more courageous than the generality of her sex; she is also cleverer and more independent. What if the relation of my experience should cause her at any time to determine to solve such mysteries for herself!

'Oh! if I thought that my beautiful, blooming Everil would ever lose her health and spirits as I have done in the pursuit of this fatal and unnatural study, I would tear my tongue out to-night rather than utter another syllable upon the subject. She is very pertinacious. It is difficult to silence her when she is once bent upon discovering a thing. She coaxes and coaxes, and questions and argues, till I am fain to give her a blunt denial. Then she draws herself a little away from me, and says poutingly:

"You do not love me, Valence."

'Not love her! Good God! if she could only know *how* I love her! That I would not resign this brief life of love with her for a century without her! and rather see her eyes beaming on me as they are beaming now, for one short moment, than possess all the loves of all the other women in the world eternally.

'Oh, Everil! if you only knew
how much I love you!

'Old Newall's words ring in my
ears day and night: "I'll engage
to restore you to your former
health and to your wife."

'What would I not give to
prove them true!

'Sometimes I fancy, if we could
stay for ever in this sequestered
spot, where it is always summer,
and the bright life around us
seems to deaden my ears to sounds
from the Spiritual World, I might
pass over that fatal date in
safety.

'Pshaw! What folly am I
writing! Has it not been decreed
by a Higher Power than I have
communicated with? Are not His
Angels ministering Spirits sent
forth to bear His fiat to man-
kind? As if I—as if She—as
if anything lower than Himself
could cancel His own words.
There is nothing left for me but
to submit.

'Yet, oh! my love! my wife!
how beautiful this world ap-
pears! How hard it is to quit
contentedly — whilst you are
here!

(To be continued.)

CAPTIVES.

BOTH of us captives—thou to me,
And I to him—and either slave
Were lost if either tyrant gave
The licence to go free!

How couldst thou face the winter wind,
That singest ever of the south?
And I, what cheer if his sweet mouth
Should frame those words unkind?

Metter for thee to take thine ease
Here in a soft captivity,
Than on the cold bough of the tree,
Uncaged, to starve and freeze.

Better for me a slave to lie
To his dear will, than, castaway,
A sad, unfettered maid to stray,
In loveless liberty.

Then warm thee in my bosom, sweet!
And I will warm me at his heart,
Since freedom from our bonds to part
Must make our lives' escheat!

B. MONTGOMERIE RANKING.

WEST END NOTES.

PRINCE'S—STOLEN GOODS—COUNT DE JARNAC—DR. HANS VON BÜLOW AND WORTH
—THE DINER-OUT—EQUIPAGES—NEW CLUBS—ODDITIES OF THE STREET—
THEATRICALS—LORDS RECTOR—LADY MANAGERS.

WHEN the enterprising Mr. Prince secured the large inclosure near to what is known to drivers as 'Anne's Place, his most sanguine visions never reached to its present state of prosperity. The cricketing was well enough, and might have proved one of those *petites santés* which endure the longest. But, by an extraordinary freak not yet explained—some of these days we may learn—the *fade* glances of fashion were directed to the place, and saw, in a rude shape of exercise, something that harmonised with its instinct. Rapid motion—peril to skin and limb—competition on equal terms with those of lower degree: these were surely diametrically opposed to the traditions of the ball-room, and must have seemed unholy to all the collected matrons and virgins. The truth is, the ball has gone by, as many a disheartened dowager has long since found; it neither blesses her that gives nor her that takes, and impoverishes both. The idea that in the ball-room desirable matches are to be made up is about as exploded as the notion that the young barrister, by attending assiduously in court, will at last attract the eyes of attorneys. It is now notorious that people merely pass through ball-rooms on their way to other places. In which desperate state of things came Prince, and saved fashionable society. Seriously, 'Prince's' is a success; and a fashionable 'ile' of the most refined description has been 'struck.' It suggests those entertainments in the last century held at what

is now the condiment shop of Messrs. Crosse and Blackwell, by a certain well-known Mrs. Cornelys; and for tickets to whose masquerades every one of distinction struggled.

What is it that has brought the invaluable Prince, with his grounds, his wheels, and his rink, into such popularity? Are our belles turning gymnastic, or do matrons love sitting in the east wind? (to draughts by the door they have long been accustomed). Can it be that the principle of the feeble croquet, long since given over to parsons as feeble, and spinsters of a congenial turn, is once more recognised? Is there a new magic in wheels and concrete? Nothing of the kind. It is stated by those who ought to know, by dowagers of average credibility, that during the past season no less than *sixty matches* were, in professional phrase, 'made up' at Prince's! Facts like these, as the testimonials would say, need no comment. But it is enough to make many a hungry matron's mouth water. Is it surprising, then, that at the last ballot about one hundred and sixty young ladies should have sought admission? Is it wonderful that the envenomed tongue of H—, which spares neither men in his jests, nor women in his chaff, should have uttered the 'slander' that the dowagers and virgins came to look for *High-men* only?

It is a touching proof of the resolution of our belles that they confront serious dangers in this cause. A fall on this iron medium

is serious, and sprained wrists, and even a broken *tibia*, are sometimes the result. As the feet are inclined to dash wildly away and leave the fair skater prone, the more prudent are said to protect themselves with a cushion. This, indeed, may be thought like the duellist who would put on a wire-wove shirt; but a fall on the back would be a serious thing for the spine. There will really be a casualty some 'fine morning'; but until a marchioness, at least, breaks her leg, the thing will go on.

The lawlessness in rifling the property of French dramatists was never so rife. The marauders are doing what is termed, in familiar phrase, 'a roaring trade.' Formerly, on any exposure, there would have been heard the whining expostulation, 'I found it on the road,' or, 'a man gave it to me, sir.' Now the band have grown so powerful and audacious from impunity, that they defy arrest, and exclaim, 'It's my own, it's my right!' Suppose a man to 'find' a suit of clothes in this way, and fit them to himself; this operation, it would seem, confers ownership! The scandal is really growing monstrous; and the spectacle of a wealthy country purloining the property of a clever neighbour to supply its own deficiency of wit is certainly not a respectable one. So does the lad at school copy his neighbour's theme. In the list given in the papers, I recently counted no less than twenty of these foreign articles. Here is the tale. 'Loan of a Lover'; 'Fish out of Water'; 'Loo'; 'Hand and Glove'; 'Clever Sir Jacob'; 'Peacock's Holiday'; 'Brighton'; 'Les Prés St. Gervais'; 'Madame Angot'; 'A Roland for an Oliver'; 'A Married Bachelor'; 'A Guardian Angel';

'The Black Prince'; 'The Two Orphans'; 'Twenty Minutes with a Tiger'; 'Love in a Fix'; 'Giroflé-Girofla'; 'Two Gregories'; 'Le Roi Carotte.' Some more could be added to the list, but I am not quite certain as to the origin of the pieces. This only shows that we are under handsome obligations to our neighbours. A good idea may be obtained of the system of 'trussing and spitting' pieces for the London markets, by the 'Times' description of "Mr. —'s graceful little piece, 'The Loan of a Lover,'" a well-known popular French *vaudeville*. This reminds me of an amateur acting lord who had translated a piece from the French, in which he was drilling a company of ladies and gentlemen, particularly the ladies, who were all admiration and enchantment at his work. At first, he received the compliments with faint disclaimer; but as the incense grew thicker and stronger, the young candidates competing with each other (Oh, how lovely that passage is, Lord —!), he was gradually persuaded into the belief of authorship. One day, I actually heard him say, 'Don't you see, I prepared for that! I gradually led up to it from the third act. It's my grand point!' So it is with our adapters. Because they prepared the omelette, they believe they actually laid the eggs. Pages could be filled with the devices of the trade.

Only imagine a couple of French writers coming to London, and, pausing at theatre doors being met in all directions by evidence of this unblushing system; recognising 'Mr. —'s graceful little piece' at the Haymarket, 'Peacock's Holiday' at the Court, &c. The other day, at Ostend, I saw the original of the well-known 'Lend me Five Shillings,' and was

amazed to find how closely the 'adapter' had followed it. Of course there was nothing about 'five shillings' in it. The whole is really become a crying scandal. Even in professedly English pieces it is impossible to find pure originality. In Mr. Gilbert's 'Sweethearts,' a pretty and graceful piece, was not the motive of the first act the same as that of the parting of Dolly and Joe Willet, in 'Barnaby Rudge'? and is not the second suggested by the meeting of Clennam and Mrs. F., in 'Little Dorrit'?

An unexpected turn in the roulette of French politics has sent Count de Jarnac to Albert Gate, who, somehow, seems to have come down from the Catskill Mountains, a diplomatic Rip Van Winkle. With him arrive certain spectres of an old and disagreeable history: the Citizen King and his Spanish marriages; Peel, and Guizot, and Palmerston. It was Count de Jarnac's name that was signed to the short and *dégagé* note which so airily informed the British Minister that he had been 'done,' or jockeyed, in that famous business. There was an old-world air in the fashion after which he re-introduced himself to the English people. Familiar letters appeared in the journals; reminding the sober Lord Derby of when they met at some farmers' club-dinner in Ireland; while to the cynical Disraeli were recalled old days of intimacy. The minds of both statesmen were, no doubt, a blank as to the farmers' dinner and other incidents; but when a long-forgotten and perhaps humble acquaintance recalls himself as an ambassador, the memory works in the most expansive and brilliant fashion. Taken in every way, there is something piquant in the associations of the new envoy. The names of Chabot and Jarnac

have the ring of the days of Henri Quatre and Rochelle. A French Protestant and of a noble family, he has been conspicuous for an honourable attachment to the fallen Orleans dynasty; repairing steadily to Claremont for family council, death, or marriage. Indeed, it is said that the good Queen Amélie, in her dying moments, committed the interests of the family to his care. It is pleasant even for the spectator, in this century, to see fidelity of any kind. His father, the Vicomte de Chabot, now almost a centenarian, married the late Duke of Leinster's sister; another Chabot is mentioned by Walpole as having married an English noble lady; so, what with an English education, an English wife, and long residence, it is not surprising that the new ambassador should have the exceptional gift of talking English with fluency and the proper accent. More piquant still is it that he should have been for twenty years and upwards an Irish landlord, domiciled at Thomastown, his Irish country seat. There he adapted himself to the rather exceptional (for a Frenchman) conditions of his adopted country, though there was much to remind him of the préfectorial system and gendarmerie of his own land. At country-houses and in Dublin drawing-rooms his was a familiar figure. He has a sort of manner that belongs to the 'old Court,' extra-ceremonious and elaborately courteous, with a voice somewhat quavering and husky. He writes. At many good Irish houses, and at many English ones, the Count and his dramas have been regularly presented at Christmas time. One of these pieces is a very solemn business—a ghostly lady who appears in an old German castle to a young student—and might have been received with

favour sixty or seventy years ago. The Count himself is fond of playing 'the young German student,' and, in spite of the terrible earnestness he imparts to the delineation, the effect is somewhat depressing for the young belles, who have come expecting to hear 'The Happy Pair,' or even 'Box and Cox.' The Count's drama will probably make its appearance at Albert Gate, and be pronounced 'charming,' and the Count's personation of the young cavalier most engaging. The difference is, as we all know, in the quality of the performer. Our ambassador has also written some novels: 'Rockingham; or, the Younger Brother'; 'Cecile,' and others; all with that curiously simple and *rococo* flavour. On the whole, he may be congratulated as a lucky Orleanist, though he cannot look forward to more than a short spell of enjoyment; for Albert Gate seems to change its tenants as regularly and as often as the Mansion House.

Two questions. The first: is Dr. Hans von Bülow a great player?

This has 'exercised' many; and, personally, I have tried every kind of way—even to hearing him—to reach a solution. This reservation may cause a smile; but, really, listening to the great *maestro*—charlatan or the reverse—is no aid. As for the professional critics, they make a sort of key-board, on which the whole gamut of 'gush,' rapture, hatred, malice, and ill-will, is sounded. The ecstasy is *fortissimo*, the hatred *largo*. Competent critics—apparently competent, from their position—declare that 'for two hours he held a *densely-packed* audience under the spell of his magic touch.' 'During some of his "feathery" passages a pin might have been heard to fall'—a phenomenon, by-the-way, so long

talked of, that one would be glad to witness it once at least. 'King of pianists,' 'masterly touch,' 'exquisite expression,' are the smallest compliments offered. Yet other critics sneer sarcastically at the wrong notes, and the mysterious 'rumble up' which he puts forward as harmonies of the music of the future. By 'rumble up' used an old teacher of ours felicitously to describe that smoke and noise under which the trained pianist retires from an attack which has failed. Seriously, there has been a conflict of opinion, which can only be accounted for by a spirit of partizanship. Some of this is, no doubt, owing to the performer, who is decidedly unsympathetic in appearance and manner. He is more the German professor; and, were a spiked helmet supplied, there would be an air of musical Bismarckship about him. Note his stiff, jerky bow. But he is all 'the fashion.' Money is pouring in, as well it may when a vast hall is filled, and a pair of hands and a pianoforte are all the elements necessary to entertain. There is something of the Philistine in his air; and though he is successfully spoiling the Egyptians here, it is probable that he holds the opinion of Mdlle. Wagner's father as to the relation of the money to the music of his host. But the question recurs, is he a great player, or the charlatan that some other professors sneeringly intimate that he is? That he is a good player, and even a 'fine player,' there can be no doubt; but a 'great player'? For that matter, *who* is the great player? We have the Essipoffs, Rubinsteins, Walter Baches, all 'cried up' and 'cried down.' There seems to be no canon established. Certain it is that a man who plays everything from memory must have a finish, a certainty of execution, a

completeness analogous to the exertion of some act of the will conceived and completed. It is evidence, too, of an amazing power of mind. Any one, again, who has seen this master conduct has seen something amazing and novel. He really forces his orchestra to be expressive, and do what he wishes, offering a strange contrast to that sort of human metronomes who so often fill the office with us, and, as it were, trot soberly *beside* the instrument, like the well-fed cob on which an elderly vicar is mounted. On the whole, then, as our public instructors are divided in opinion, I am for this great German musician. And any one who heard him at a late Saturday Popular Concert, in Mendelssohn's quintette, would have been enchanted with his velvety yet firm and powerful touch—no muddled colours or confusion.

The second question:—Who would the reader—'gentle' or 'courteous' as he may be—take to be the most *recherché* persons in Europe at this moment?—that is, the persons who, being set down in any capital, would command from the great and fashionable the highest attention and pecuniary reward. This speculation is not so easy to resolve as might be supposed. Would Mdlle. Patti, the Marquise de Caux, be one of these attractions?—whose two or three hours' singing of a night commands two hundred pounds, with carriages, hotel and other extras furnished, to say nothing of what the French call her '*feux*,' i.e., allowance for dresses, furniture of rooms, &c.; indeed, anything she pleases. Nor is this the only welcome that she commands, for emperors, kings, princes, court lords and dames, are delighted to honour her. Her treasury of jewels must be unequalled in Europe.

But the other? Certainly, M.

Worth, the grand man-milliner. The history of success is always interesting; but certainly the career and position of this artist are more *bizarre* and singular than those of any adventurer.

Mark the quaint contradiction—an Englishman leading Paris, itself a mystery; an Englishman teaching the French to dress, another and greater mystery. Every fine lady, that is, every really fine lady, in Europe, at his feet. It was the Empire that engendered this wonderful being, for whom, as I write, I feel the profoundest admiration and respect—a feeling that, no doubt, would be lessened were I brought into direct relations with him. What must that man's honourable pride be as he rises in the morning, and thinks what is before him during the day! Despatches, couriers even, from all the Courts. This Russian princess's *trousseau*, that German queen's ball dresses, English, Danish, Greek, Turkish, and the rest. Then the innumerable duchesses, marquises, the wealthy magnates whose daughters marry into the peerage; the Americans, splendid patrons, all of whom '*must* get their dresses from Worth.' He has another class of clients, no less numerous and important, the vast army of *modistes*. Who does not know the circular of the provincial *modiste*? 'Madame Cobb, Ladies' Corsage and Robe Maker to the Court, has just returned from her autumn trip to Paris, with a rich and *recherché* stock of all the *hautes nouveautés*.' If this lady belong to a city like Dublin, Edinburgh, Manchester, and the like, she will have waited on the great man-milliner, and purchased some of his 'patterns'; not, be it understood, a mere formula in tissue-paper, by which to cut out her own finery, but one of his rich, fully-furbelowed *robes*, which she has the

privilege of reproducing for her customers. Only conceive what a *clientèle* is here; above all, what clients the Elises and others of her calibre must be! In the British Isles alone there must be some hundreds. The weddings, too, in Europe, Asia, Africa, and America; for any wedding of consequence would 'want finish,' as Mr. Disraeli would say, if a few Worth dresses were not in the *trousseau*; while your millionaire bride is, in nautical phrase, wholly 'rigged out' by the great man. Not long since, a lady, whose sister was about to be married, unfolded to us after what manner they approached this great constructor. The lady who was to be married possessed a very large fortune. Her *trousseau* was to consist of some forty dresses from this master; so that the ordering, designing, &c., were matters of time and serious deliberation. The mere getting an audience of such a being, thus actively engrossed with orders for queens and princesses, required some tact. To interest him was the first thing, contrived through one of his leading female deputies, who was duly conciliated. The rooms are bare; there are no finished dresses dispersed about on frames to entice; that is not required; besides, there is a copyright strictly maintained. The mere casual client would, therefore, be bewildered, and scarcely know what she desired, having nothing to direct her choice. The deputy propitiated, all went smoothly and delightfully; the grand artist was put *en rapport*. There was an intermediary, to whom wishes could be expressed without awe or *gêne*, and who took care they were carried out. The system was really symmetrical, if costly. His practised intelligence at once apportioned the order with an effect and

splendour that went beyond the cost. On the basis of the forty dresses a brilliant series of original efforts was mapped out; for this great artist has no forms which he repeats. He suits all to the person, to the figure, to the position in life, with an amazing variety and originality. There is none of the vulgar empiric 'fitting on' which common bunglers require to patch their own faulty work. The measure taken, almost mathematically, an unerring result follows. His strokes are as round and true as the O of Giotto, and it seems an affront to suppose that there could be failure. Nor is the cost so extravagant, after all. The average dress, I was informed, came to about forty pounds, setting apart, of course, those prodigies of lace and trimmings, which were special; but the materials—specially made for him—are the finest the world can furnish. The silks, *not to be worn out!* Such is Worth, the great man-milliner.

Considering the number of pleasant dinners given, and what pleasant things are said and told, we must regret the vast amount of liveliness and jest that passes off into the air and is never heard of again. A few Grevilles, and perhaps Boswells, may be busy with their note-books, on their return from a party. The 'Man in the Mask' has often 'booked' the choicest of the unconsidered trifles, though half the effect must be set down to the scenery, dresses, and decorations of the little stage. Some of them are at the service of the indulgent reader.

How pleasant is composure and social presence of mind! For a general imperturbability B—— is deservedly celebrated. At a leading provincial theatre, where he had the *entrée* to the stage, he was conversing with the pleasing actresses

who was to open the play, and was already seated at the inevitable table. The conversation was interesting. Suddenly the curtain rose and revealed B—— to the audience. He, of course, rushed away, in the conventional fashion, pursued by the yells of the gallery and the not-even-attempted-to-be-suppressed oath of the stage-manager. Nothing of the kind. He rose deliberately, and with a low bow—he was in evening *tenue*—said, 'I shall let Sir Charles know of your arrival. Good-bye. *Au revoir!*' Amazing composure! Of course, there was some speculation as to what had become of 'Sir Charles,' whose name was not in the bill; and, indeed, some wonder why the gentlemanly actor did not appear again.

A lively lady, when the subject of 'strong-minded women' was being discussed, made this remark: 'I notice that those "women's rights" people are invariably men's "lefts."' Mr. Dickens used to repeat this with admiration.

After Mr. Disraeli had likened the late Cabinet to a line of extinct volcanoes, some Conservative members, for whom the allusion was too refined, were asking as to the *literal* meaning of the figure. A member for one of the London boroughs said promptly, 'He meant *used-up craters*, of course.'

A French valet lately engaged at a noble house, startled the company with the following announcement before breakfast: 'Prayers is on the table!'

Dialogue between a lady and an Irish servant. 'Not at home! Would you inquire?' Servant returns: 'She's not at home, ma'am; but *she says* she'll be in in an hour.'

A noble lord lately took in a City lady to dinner. She ex-

plained on the completeness of her country villa—the flowers, greenhouses, or what she called, 'outouses.' She added, 'In fact, we eat our little all every day.' Thinking this was a figurative way of saying that she lived expensively, the noble lord smiled, and asked, was not that a little imprudent. The *equivocal* continued for some moments, the lady, it seems, meaning, 'We heat our little hall every day.'

A man of letters was recently in a country district of Ireland, with one of those short-legged, long-backed, and splay-footed creatures ye call 'Turnspits.' The creature excited much surprise, being unfamiliar; and one of the countrymen, surveying our friend gravely, declared, 'Shure, he's an author!' The man of letters blushed with pleasure; he was found out. 'How did you know?' he said, smiling. 'By his back and shnout,' was the reply. The countryman was thinking of an *otter*, pronounced in the flattering way described.

The Bishop of —, who is *spirituel*, though demure enough, was lately entering a room at Lady —'s party. Two ladies, rather too abundantly *décolletées*, were in the doorway, and scarcely seemed inclined to open the passage. His Lordship cast down his eyes and pressed forward, when the ladies drew aside their skirts. 'The fact is, my Lord,' said one, 'the milliners *will* put such a quantity of material into our skirts, that really'——'That there is nothing left for what you call the body,' said the Bishop, slyly.

Over the door of a 'shebeen,' in the county of Antrim, a visitor lately noticed an advertisement of a dance, with these rates of admission: 'Gentlemen, a penny; ladies, *your pleasure!*' From the

same country comes a pleasant poetical effort to commemorate a dog whom the poet suspected had been poisoned:

EPITAPH.

Beneath this yew-tree, in this Oval so
completely,
Lies Hector, our dog, whom his Lordship
loved dearly.
He barked and he yowled when the
children went a-walking;
He was shot by Peter on Christmas
morning.
*I blame Archie Tobin for not feeding him
regularly,
And Mullins at the gate, who was in the
constabulary.*

A lively Irishman, asking for his letters at a foreign post-office, was required to show his passport or card. He had neither; but, with ingenious readiness, turned down his coat and exhibited his name in marking-ink on his shirt collar. The official smiled and delivered the letters. One of the diners said that this was giving one's name and 'dress.

Thus a window cleaner, in reply to the writer: 'You have a large family, I believe?' 'No, sir, they are all able to take care of themselves.' The ellipse here, as though the relationship and charge of maintenance were convertible, is characteristic.

'I am having myself taken in oil,' said a well-known physician, complacently looking round. 'Cod-liver, I suppose,' growled a Jerroldian.

It was lately debated what inscription should be placed on the monument of a well-known Dublin physician, just set up in the midst of the cemetery. A professional brother suggested borrowing the one on Wren at St. Paul's—'Si monumentum quaeris circumspice.' This is of the 'first class.'

I lately read in some newspaper a description of what the reporter called 'the origin and gestation

of the building.' A most mysterious phrase.

The Royal carriages that we see trundling along the Mall can scarcely be considered brilliant 'turns-out'; some, indeed, drawn from the coach-houses under the alarming pressure of foreign guests, belong decidedly to the category of Shandradan. Not so long since, when the 'cold-shouldered' Empress of Russia (no allusion to the august lady's own person) was here on what, by a strained sense of the phrase, is called 'a visit,' I saw her and her suite driving out to the country in two open carriages, to each of which ordinary posters were attached, with postboys in the usual shabby blue jackets and shining white hats!

As a matter of pure criticism, it may be said that the Prince of Wales's equipages are scarcely worthy of his taste. There seems to be but one pattern; the claret-coloured double brougham, with very high, strong horses, which would be more appropriately attached to a coach. There is, indeed, no such ugly and uninteresting vehicle as this clarence, or brougham, made to hold four, 'let out' clumsily in front, as a thrifty lady would her dress. A light one-horse brougham is an elegant little vehicle; but these hermaphrodites convey the very opposite idea to state. When room for four, or three, is required, the landau or coach should be used. At the Bois, we can take a lesson in the shape and general style of carriages; and it must be owned that both Paris and Brussels turn out more brilliant equipages than we do. There is a tendency to re-introduce the old chariot, the true framing for your *grande dame* going to ball or court. Horses, footmen, coachman, all are shown to the best advantage. 'Jeames,'

in particular, springing up airily behind, is seen under conditions which set him off to perfection. Some twenty years ago, a society scoured the kingdom, seeking out all the old rusty vehicles—like that dreadful company in France, of fifty years ago, the *Bande Noir*, which went about buying old castles and mansions for the sake of the materials. Five pounds was the price offered, and accepted, for an average old chariot, which, like the house, was pulled to pieces, and the wheels sold for carts, cabs, &c. I myself recall the visit and proposals of the agents of this curious society.

Two new clubs are on the eve of being opened, the St. Stephen's and the Devonshire; Conservative and Liberal, reciprocal bane and antidote. The St. Stephen's is a successful building, in a most delightful position, the window commanding the 'silent highway.' At night the view becomes poetical: the long lines of light, the bridges stretching across, sprinkled with lamps, and the fiery dial of the Westminster clock-tower high in the air. This building certainly improves the Houses of Parliament, by supplying a standard with which to compare them. The Devonshire has chosen a mansion of ill omen. One would think that the maledictions of ruined gamblers still fluttered through the rooms. Once, 'Crockford's,' next a restaurant, the Wellington, then an auction mart, which was to be like the Hôtel Drouot in Paris, and for which it was fitted with an imposing stone front. This auction business, which was to demolish the profitable 'Christie's' (reported to have made a hundred thousand pounds last year), seems to be the most disastrous speculation conceivable. It appeared—for I have often turned in—as though nothing

would sell, or nobody would buy or bid there. The great rooms were deserted; the auctioneer was always sorry to begin. What curious mutations! This has suggested the following:—

'Here was gluttony, dicing, the bidders'
faint stammer;
But 'tis now just the same, yes! by
heaven, sir!
They'll be eating their pledges; selling
votes by the hammer,
And gambling for place in the Devon-
shire!

How ineffably depressing is what is called the '*Cercle*' abroad. During a weary two months' banishment to Arcachon, in the south of France, I was duly, and with some solemnity—there being a pretence of keeping up the fiction of a certain exclusiveness—inducted a member of the '*Cercle*.' It was on a first floor, over the invariable café, and seemed to project on the mind, for recollection, the elements of a pageboy and some green-cloth-covered tables, and moderators with large opal shades. The air was always impregnated with stale tobacco, and the whole had the air of a doctor's well-kept apartments. There were newspapers and a billiard-table. Who were the frequenters of it I never could divine; but they seemed respectable, and evidently had money, playing piquet every night, and deeply, until the page-boy openly slept. There was no trade in the place, no one to buy or sell, as it seemed—half the houses appeared to be shut up. Yet the club flourished. But clubs are certainly overdone, as can be seen from the vast numbers appealing for support through the newspapers. This is really inverting the order. Clubs should spring naturally from the association of men; but association of men will not spring from the formation of a club. The same inversion is seen

in the case of theatres, which arise out of acting; while it is assumed that, given a theatre, acting must follow. These advertised clubs are no more than great restaurants, with annual subscribers.

A walk from the West End to the City is entertaining enough, if one learns to use one's eyes on the principle of Mrs. Barbauld's good boys. It requires some practice, the 'paying an uncommon sight of attention,' as Mr. Wegg says. I was lately much delighted with the following inscription, displayed in an aristocratic neighbourhood:—

JOS. MERRY,

UNDERTAKER;

And he desires to combine respectability with economy; and to present the means of interment upon such a scale, as shall come within the ability of all.

Mr. Dickens would have enjoyed this, and, had he been alive, should have seen it. The wish to 'present the means of interment' upon easy terms, and the insinuation that some, through lack of money, are compelled to deny themselves this luxury, is really excellent. It suggests that other gentleman of the profession, whose advertisement ran, 'Great reduction: *now is your time to be buried*'—and which is, in its way, very enjoyable. It really, in a rough way, represents that impatience with which is paid a long series of premiums to an insurance office, and the instinctive wish to realise something in return for what we have been paying so long. When there is a slack demand on his services, the poor dealer in mortuaries naturally bethinks him of the customary invitations of his brother tradesmen. There is quaint pippin flavour about the follow-

ing, which I note on a dairy cart: 'Selected cows for the nursery;' as though one would say 'selected raisins.' There is a grotesque dignity in the expression, 'a selected cow.' I notice also a servants' agency: 'Royal Livery and Domestic Institute'—i.e., institute for 'domestics.' But what is a 'Royal Livery' Institute? Again, we have all seen those framed diplomas in tradesmen's windows: 'You are hereby appointed manufacturer of artificial limbs to her Majesty'—a simple, straightforward formula. But under the late French Empire, this sort of 'brevet' was phrased in singular style: 'Convinced,' it ran, 'of the *moralité* of M. —, and wishing to give him a particular mark of our esteem and appreciation, and at the same time convinced of the excellence and merit of his productions, we hereby appoint you,' &c. The German brevet seems to lay stress on its authorisation to a tradesman of bearing the royal arms at the top of the diploma. How characteristic of each country all this is.

There is a general profaneness abroad, and people are inclined generally to lay hands on any and every ark. But the following, I own, made me gasp. 'Goldsmith's comedy, "She Stoops to Conquer," re-arranged by Mr. —.'

In some future 'Maskings' I shall deal with the eccentricities of theatrical advertising. That there is matter for noting will be evident from this specimen, which was in an Alhambra bill lately: 'The new and novel effects by,' &c. I also see advertised 'the new Robertsonian comedy-bouffe.' If there were such a thing *in esse*, it would be the most curious dramatic hybrid that the world has yet seen. All the elements are opposed and self-destructive. There can be but one kind of comedy,

which may be written by a Robertson, or any one with suitable powers. As well talk of the 'new Millaisian painting.' *Bouffe*, however, is discordant with Mr. Robertson's style, such as it was. The malicious might protest that comedy itself and Mr. Robertson were divorced: while genuine comedy and *bouffe* have nothing in common. So much for 'charming Robertsonian comedy-bouffe.'

There are, however, some cheering signs in the state of the theatrical weather. One is that of a taste for Shakespeare and really classical pieces. This, again, is turning our actors' attention to good characters well worthy of their study. It is some surprise when we find Mr. Clayton abandoning light and eccentric comedy for the serious drama, and the result shows his wisdom. Macbeth and Cromwell are the two important characters he has undertaken, and of the former very high praise comes from the country. In the banquet scene he is particularly successful. After the murder he 'ages' himself. We shall look with interest for this performance in London.

Public men, in addition to their official burdens, have a good many trials and inconveniences suspended over their heads. Among these, perhaps the most annoying is the honour of being invited to stand for the Lord-Rectorship of one of the many Scotch universities. The awarding of this distinction recurs so frequently, that it really seems to the public as though the 'encumbering' of some unhappy person with the dignity is always going on. Invitations are being perpetually hawked about; and Mr. Froude, Lord Derby, Mr. Carlyle, Mr. Emerson, Mr. Ruskin, and many other persons are importuned to

allow themselves to be put in 'nomination.' Then we hear of the 'polling,' and the 'four nations,' and certain local excitement. Seriously, the thing is being overdone; or, if the overdoing must continue, there are plenty of excellent Scotchmen, who are more fitted to understand and appreciate the distinction than English gentlemen, who do not like to mortify by a refusal. To preside over Oxford, Cambridge, Dublin, or London University is justly considered a high honour, and to this list the University of Edinburgh might be fairly added. But the inferior Scotch universities, which are little above the rank of large high schools, with their recurring 'putting Mr. Ruskin in nomination,' and their 'pollings,' are growing to be a nuisance, and they will, by-and-by, be told as much by some plain-spoken person to whom the application may be made.

Managing a theatre is a costly pastime, as some noble lords have lately discovered; but there is a method by which it can be done vicariously, without any expense or trouble. This is usually contrived in the case of a lady, who gets a gentleman to pay all the expenses, and delegates the trouble of arrangement, &c., to a deputy. There is left only an amusing remnant of management. Where the ostensible deputy has tact, and knows his business, the venture often succeeds; but more often there is a general raid on the purse of the unhappy personage who furnishes the 'asses' milk' for the experiment. Language too strong cannot be used to characterise this grossest of affronts to the audience, or the conduct of respectable performers who take service under such conditions and such companionship. It will hardly be cre-

dited that there are nearly half a dozen leading theatres at this time conducted on this principle; and it has actually come to this, that a noble art is made to contribute to a shocking scandal. Corrupted as the French audience is, it would

not tolerate such an outrage; and when, some years ago, a notorious person was attempted to be thus presented by influential patrons, she was hunted from the footlights in a storm of disapprobation and jeering.

THE MAN IN THE MASK.



A RARE SPECIMEN.

NEW BOOKS RECEIVED.

'The Neglected Question.' From the Russian of B. Markewitch. *Henry S. King and Co.*

'Vanessa.' By the Author of 'Dorothy.' *Henry S. King and Co.*

'Philip Mannington.' By H. Schutz-Wilson. *Tinsley Brothers.*

'Olympia.' By R. E. Francillon. *Grant and Co.*

'Travels in South America.' By Paul Marcoy. *Blackie and Son.*

'Elsie's Expedition.' By F. E. Weatherly. *F. Warne and Co.*

'This Troublesome World.' By Lady Barker. *Hatchards.*

'True-hearted.' By Crona Temple. *Hatchards.*

'The Game of Sphairistike.' By Walter Wingfield. *Harrison and Sons.*

THE advent amongst us of so important a person as the Duchess of Edinburgh naturally makes every particular regarding Russian life and manners more interesting than it was before. We are no longer contented with the historical facts concerning our great northern neighbour. We want to know how the Russian people live, and what they do, and if their home customs differ from our own. Under which circumstances 'The Neglected Question' cannot fail to interest. We do not recommend this novel for its story, which is slight and rather improbable; but for the insight it gives to the domestic habits of the middle classes in Russia. It is written in a simple, unaffected style, but the descriptions are sufficiently graphic to leave a clear impression on the mind. We live with Anna Vassilievna and Vera Petrowna whilst we are reading it, and part with them with no little regret.

The author of 'Dorothy' has

gained some favourable reviews before now; but we do not consider 'Vanessa' an improvement on her former works. The principal female character commences her career under such repellant auspices, that it is difficult to get up an interest in her at the close. Under no circumstances could the deceitful, fickle Amy become an honest woman; and we think the author has used poor Charlton very badly by palming her off on him. Helen is too masculine and Eva too weak to excite much sympathy. Indeed, if the word heroine means what it used to do, 'Vanessa' is without one; and the men are not much better. Dennis O'Brien is the most manly; but, under the circumstances, he would have been more natural had he been less so.

We remember so vividly the pleasure afforded us by Mr. Schutz-Wilson's 'Studies and Romances,' that we were rather disappointed in 'Philip Mannington.' Perhaps our disappointment arose from a complimentary reason, for there is certainly not enough of it. The story would have made a good three-volume novel; but in its present condition it is not sufficiently worked out. The principal incidents follow too abruptly on one another, and are too faintly sketched in, whilst ample space is afforded for a description of student life in Italy, which has little to do with the actual story. This leads us to suspect that, had the scene been laid entirely in Rome, it would have suited the author's pen and purpose better. The second part of the volume, 'The Alps in Gladness' and 'The Alps in Sadness,' is written in his old style, and we like it the better of the two.

'Olympia' has already appeared in the pages of the 'Gentleman's Magazine.' Mr. Francillon has all the talent requisite to be a word-painter; but he has yet to learn how to mix his colours. His plot is interesting, but the construction is crude. The interest attached to his various characters, instead of being evenly worked in, so as to be kept in sight throughout the narrative, comes upon us by fits and starts. We jump from the convict to Olympia, from Olympia to Major Sullivan, and from Major Sullivan to Don Pedro, without seeing the least connection between the parties. The whole effect, in consequence, is 'patchy.' It is not necessary, in order to keep a secret in fiction, to prevent the reader following the thread of the story; and not to be able to do so produces a weariness which too often results in lack of interest. It is as little suited to keep up the attention in a serial as in a set of volumes. Whatever the mystery during its course, a tale, when looked back upon, should appear like a harmonious picture, light and shade blending into each other, so as to be indistinguishable. 'Olympia,' looked back upon, is like a number of short stories, tacked on to one another. It strikes us as having been constructed as it was written, instead of beforehand.

The two handsome volumes which comprise (as the publishers inform us) the second and 'less luxurious' edition of M. Paul Marcoy's 'Travels in South America' are quite fit to be ranked amongst the gift books of the season. There is more to be learned of the country of which these travels treat from the work before us than from a dozen books of geography. M. Marcoy must be the original of the good little boy in the tale from

'Evenings at Home,' called 'Eyes and no Eyes.' He seems to have employed not only his eyes, but his ears, and mouth, and hands, and every sense he possesses, to gather for us this varied and inexhaustible fund of information. The five hundred and twenty-five illustrations also that enrich the book add greatly to its interest. We wish we could see volumes like these more generally introduced into schools. What a boon they would be, with their pictures and their fun, to the poor little heads that addle themselves in vain over dry descriptions of foreign countries, with the statistics of their population, and a list of their rivers. Let us hope they may be, and that the superintendents will commence with M. Marcoy's. We prognosticate it will be cheaper in the end.

Mr. Weatherly, in his preface, directs our attention to the probability that some people may consider 'Elsie's Expedition' a plagiarism on 'Alice in Wonderland': he admits it is an *imitation*. We did not know before that there was much difference in the terms. Walker says that to 'plagiarise' is 'to purloin from the writings of another,' and to 'imitate' is to 'copy,' or to 'counterfeit.'

Now, we don't want to bring any accusation against Mr. Weatherly, who is a charming writer in himself, and has no need to copy any one; but if he adopts a plan so entirely original and unique as was Mr. Carroll's, and sends forth a story to the world built on it, whatever he feels, ill-natured people *will* accuse him of plagiarism. There had never been a child's book before like 'Alice.' It took all hearts because of its freshness, and a copy can never be fresh. Had 'Elsie's Expedition' been original, we should have

hailed it as an exceedingly clever child's book; as it is, we are sorry it should remind us so powerfully of its predecessor, and particularly as we consider the author is quite competent to have evolved a plan and plot by himself. He knows exactly the language in which to write for little children. We hope his next Christmas book will be all his own.

Lady Barker's little volume can scarcely be called a child's book, although its general appearance would make one think so. It is a true Scottish story of the year 1740, and the heroine, 'Bet of Stow,' is a very lovable and admirable character, the romantic side of whose nature is entirely filled with her devotion to Prince Charlie. The adventures she goes through are as sensational as can be desired, and the end she comes to as pathetic. It is a charming story for girls.

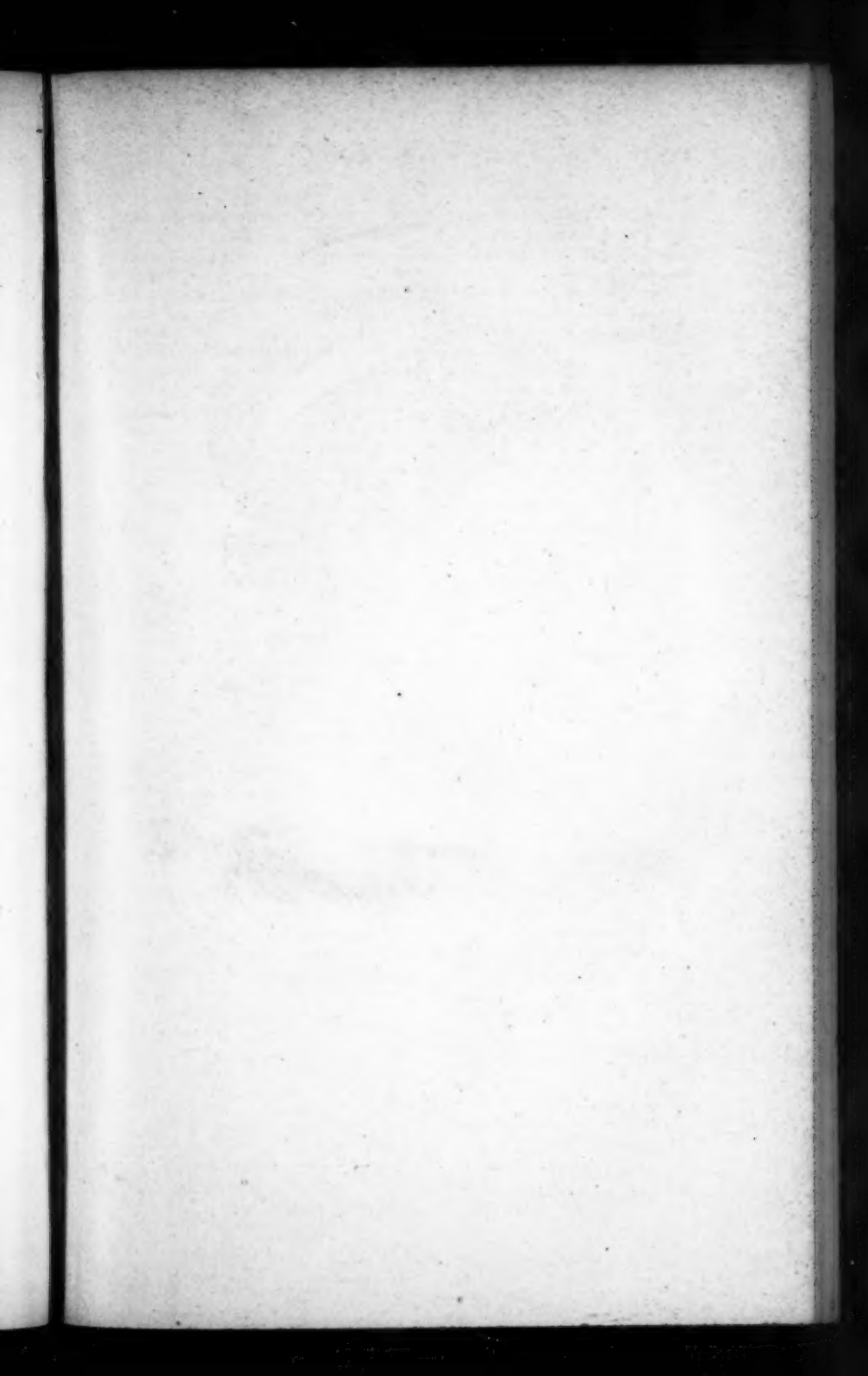
'True-hearted' is written expressly for the younger portion of the feminine sex, and will doubtless be appreciated by them.

Hester Wallingham and Jeanie Durant are two naturally-painted girls, but Redmond is almost too good for this world. However, it would not do, perhaps, to draw lovers in books exactly as they appear in real life, and so we must let Redmond pass muster; and Miss Temple was wise to put him in. Nothing offends very young ladies more than to offer them an

instructive story without a lover. It is the grey powder without the jam. They cannot swallow it.

The pamphlet which contains a description of Captain Wingfield's new game, 'Sphairistike,' winds up with so long a list of noble patrons who have already bought and approved of it, that we fear we can say little to add to its popularity. All the best periodicals, too, sound its praises in no measured terms; but we suppose it will belong so especially to 'London Society' in the country that we are glad of an opportunity of introducing it to the notice of our readers. Its English name is 'Lawn Tennis,' and its great advantages appear to be that it can be played within a small space, by both sexes, and unremittingly. It is especially suited for cold weather also, as it requires some amount of activity, and there are none of the long, wearisome pauses in it which render croquet the most fatiguing of games to all but those immediately interested, and the couples who wish to flirt, 'untalked of and unseen.' The box which contains the game is portable, and the paraphernalia easily erected. The price, too, considering the necessary durability of the articles, and the amount of amusement to be derived from them, is not expensive. Messrs. French and Co., 46, Churton Street, Pimlico, are its sole agents.







Drawn by M. E. Edwards.]

'TO-MORROW IS ST. VALENTINE'S DAY.'

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LONDON SOCIETY.

FEBRUARY, 1875.

ABOVE SUSPICION.

By Mrs. J. H. RODELL.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE FIRST EVENING.

HAD Mr. Wright known as much about women as he did about many things—say writes, for example—he would not have spoiled the pleasure of his homeward journey by speculating on what Selina might say.

Men are very catholic in their ideas of beauty. If a face is pretty and a figure good, it matters little to the masculine mind whether the owner be tall or short, plump or slight, fair or dark, pensive or piquant. A woman, on the contrary, has, as a rule, only one standard, and that is herself. The world—the usages of society—the little commonplace experiences of everyday life—the natural and charming deceitfulness of her sex, teach her to disguise this peculiarity even from other women; and therefore it is that we so often hear the phrases 'sweet,' 'charming,' 'pretty, fragile creature,' 'such a grand face,' and other expressions of a similar character, which might well deceive any one unaccustomed to look behind the curtain.

Sliding behind that curtain, in the London of dressing-gown and whatever may be the present substitute for curl-papers—or *tête-à-*

tête at five-o'clock tea—or dreamily chatting by the sea-side while the waves ripple in and out upon the sand—or drawn into the still closer confidence engendered by a wet afternoon in a country house,—woman, talked to by woman, knows 'all about it.' She learns how Mrs. Juno 'is distrustful of small snake-like women;' how interesting Miss Hysteria wonders what people can like in Diana; how Light-hair thinks there is always something staring about black eyes; while Black-eyes says, 'for her part,' she believes she never yet was a straightforward woman to be found under the outward guise of a pretty doll.

We hear a great deal about the attraction of physical antagonism, but the reader may be certain this attraction never exists in the same sex. A woman's idea of a hero may be as opposite to herself as night is to day; but her true ideal of a heroine will be the creature she has seen reflected back from her mirror every day since, perched on tip-toe, she first beheld her own face in the looking-glass.

Precisely the same remark would hold good with regard to men, were it not that men are not in-